

Bookworm & Toothless (Stranger Things AU) by CarrieWrites

Series: Bookworm & Toothless (My Stranger Things AU Series) [1]

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Summary:

Jessica Hernandez.

Best friends with Mike Wheeler, Will Byers, Lucas Sinclair and Dustin Henderson

A real pottymouth.

Known as the Scholar of the group.

Or 'Bookworm' to Troy and his 'minions'.

She doesn't like to admit it but, she has a die-hard crush on the boy who loves chocolate pudding.

So when Will goes missing and a girl by the name 'Eleven' appears mysteriously, she becomes more cautious on what might happen as stranger things start to appear more and more often.

1. Chapter 1

Author's Note:

I decided to bring my Stranger Things Fanfic from Wattpad to ArchiveOfOurOwn!

Jessica was pedaling her bike to the Wheelers, her long dark brown hair flying behind her in a tight ponytail.

She had on her backpack full of books and novels she liked to read just in case the boys decided not to play D&D at the last minute like LAST TIME.

She sighed, as she arrived at the house, getting off her bike and pushing it to the side where three other bikes were.

She knocked on the door, biting her lip.

Mrs. Wheeler opened the door, smiling at the brunette.

"Jessica! So glad you're here. The boys are down in the basement."

The girl smiled, her dimples showing.

"Thanks, Mrs. Wheeler," she says, her heavy Latin accent showing.

She heads in, walking to the door to the basement.

She grins when she sees the four boys sitting around a board.

"¡Hola chicos!" she yelled, causing them to turn their heads, all of them grinning.

"Jess is here!" Mike cheered, getting up and tackling her into a hug.

"Hey Mike!" she laughed, hugging him.

"You brought your books? Really?" Lucas asked, smiling and shaking his head.

"Well, I didn't know if you were going to blow D&D off like the LAST

TIME we all came here to hang out so I came prepared," she says, shrugging.

"We don't call you our 'Scholar' for nothing!" Dustin says, grinning, making Jessica blush.

"Of course not Dustin, I nearly beat up Mike to give me that name," she says, grinning at Mike.

He rolls his eyes, smiling.

"So we ready to play?" Will asked, looking at Mike.

"If Jess is, then yup."

Jess smiled.

"LETS FUCKING PLAY!" she yelled, causing the boys to laugh.

X

"Something is coming. Something hungry for blood." Mike says dramatically, causing Jess to listen intently, careful not to miss a word.

"A shadow grows on the wall behind you, swallowing you in darkness."

Will and Jess look at each other, Jess smirking, revealing that she already knew what it was.

"It is almost here."

"What is it?" Will asked.

"What if it's the Demogorgon?" Dustin asked, causing Jess to roll her eyes.

"Oh, Jesus, we're so screwed if it's the Demogorgon."

"It's not the Demogorgon," Lucas argued.

"It is the Demogorgon," Jess argued back, causing Lucas to roll his

eyes.

"An army of troglodytes charge into the chamber!" Mike announced, slamming the board.

Jess rolled her eyes as Lucas smirked at her.

"You were saying?"

"Troglodytes?" Dustin asks incredulously, staring at Jess.

"Told ya." Lucas teased.

She knew this charade Mike was playing but she wasn't going to say anything.

"Wait a minute..." Mike says softly, causing Jess to smirk.

"Did you hear that? That....that sound?"

Will noticed Jess' smirk growing bigger and bigger as Mike continued on.

"Boom...boom...BOOM!" Mike yells, slamming the table, everyone but Jess flinching.

"That didn't come from the troglodytes. No, that...that came from something else."

Jess grins at Lucas and Dustin's glances at each other.

Mike suddenly slams a figure on the table. It's-

"THE DEMOGORGON!" Mike announced, causing the boys to groan.

"You were saying?" Jess teased Lucas.

"Shut up." he snapped, causing her to laugh.

"Never doubt your Scholar." she sighs, watching the boys bicker.

"We're in deep shit." Dustin groaned.

"Will, your action!" Mike told Will.

"I don't know!"

"Fireball him!" Lucas yelled.

"I'd have to roll a 13 or higher!"

"Too risky. Cast a protection spell." Dustin argued.

"Don't be a pussy. Fireball him!"

"Cast Protection."

"The Demogorgon is tired of your silly human bickering!" Mike interrupts, causing the boys to shut up, making Jess giggle.

"It stomps towards you. Boom!"

"Fireball him!"

"Another stomp, boom!"

"Cast Protection."

"He roars in anger!"

The boys are yelling all at once and Will is unable to decide.

Jess decided to play mercy and whisper in his ear;

"Fireball the fucker."

With the majority deciding Fireball, he rolls the dice and yells, "Fireball!"

However, the dice fell on the floor, the entertainment for Jess ending.

"Oh shit!"

"¡Ay mierda!" Jess cursed, getting up.

"Where'd it go?" Lucas asked.

"Where is it?"

"I don't know!" Will exclaimed.

"Is it a 13?" Dustin asked.

"I don't know!"

"Where is it?"

"Oh, my god!" Dustin panicked, causing Jess to turn to the boy with the curly hair.

"Dustin, calm down!" she says, walking towards him.

"Mike!"

"Can you find it yet?" Lucas asked.

"Mike!"

"No, I can't find it!"

"Mike!"

Mike looks up, and see his mom standing on the stairs leading to the basement.

"Mom, we're in the middle of a campaign!"

"You mean the end? Fifteen after."

"Oh my god! Freaking idiot!" Lucas yelled.

"Why do we have to go?" Will groaned.

Jess sighed as Mike went up the stairs, trying to talk his mom into giving them a couple more minutes.

"Oh, I got it!" Will exclaimed, causing Jess to turn and walk up to him.

"Does the seven count?"

Jess groaned, getting on her jacket.

"It was a seven? Did Mike see it?" Lucas asked.

Will shook his head no.

"Then it doesn't count."

Jess put on her backpack while the boys put on their jackets.

"Hey guys, does anyone want this?" Dustin asked, holding the pizza box.

"No." The boys say.

"Normally I would but, ugh, I'm so full." Jess sighs, clutching her stomach.

"Wanna see if Nancy wants it?" he asked, causing Jess to snort.

"I highly doubt that she would but, it wouldn't hurt to ask."

X

The two walked up the stairs, Jess reading Stephen King's 'Carrie' on the way up.

"No, I don't think..."

Jess shot her head up to see the high schooler talking on the phone.

"Yeah, he's cute."

Dustin waved as Jess marked the page she was in and placed it back in her backpack.

"Barb, no, I don't think so."

Jess rolled her eyes as Nancy didn't notice her or Dustin's presence.

"Barb, you're not-"

"Hey, Nancy," Dustin says catching her attention.

"There's a slice left if you want it."

Her eyes dart to the brunette that had her hand on the boy's shoulder, looking at him gently while giving her a glare.

"Sausage and Pepperoni!"

"Hold on," she says before getting off the bed, causing Jess to give her a warning glare.

'Cute.' Nancy chuckled in her head as she gave them both a smile, Dustin smiling at her as she walked to the door.

She then slams it in their faces.

Jess rolls her eyes and flips off the door.

X

"There's something wrong with your sister," Dustin says to Mike when they both walk outside.

"Terribly wrong." Jess agrees.

"What are you two talking about?"

"She's got a stick up her butt," Dustin says.

"She's being an asshole," Jess adds.

"Yeah. It's because she's dating that douchebag, Steve Harrington." Lucas says, causing Jess widen her eyes.

"She's dating that motherfucker?!" she exclaimed.

"Yeah, she's turning into a real jerk," Dustin says as they all got on their bikes.

"She's always been a real jerk," Mike argued.

"No, not really," Jess argued back.

"Nuh-uh, she used to be cool. Like the time she dressed like an elf for

our Elder tree campaign."

"Four years ago!" Mike called.

"Still a valid point!" Jess calls as she rode with Dustin.

"Just saying!" Dustin calls.

"Later," Lucas says as they rode off.

X

"Goodnight ladies and gentleman," Lucas says as he got to his house.

"Night Sinclair!" Jess calls back.

"Kiss your mom 'night for me," Dustin says, causing Jess to giggle.

As she got to her house, she turned to the two boys.

"Night boys! Love you!" she yelled, sticking her tongue out.

"Night Jess! Love you too!" they both called out, sticking their tongues out.

As she rode into the garage, pushing her bike aside, she had no idea what the events that will unfold later in the night and following couple days.

2. Chapter 2

Summary for the Chapter:

After a run in with Troy and his 'minion', Jess and the boys learn that Will is missing.

Jess was riding her bike to school, grinning at Dustin who now had caught up.

"¡Buenas días Dustin!"

"¡Buenas días Jess!"

"¡Buenas días chicas!" Lucas says, causing Jess to stick out her tongue.

"Shut up Lucas!" Jess laughs.

X

As the four of them (Mike had joined them as soon as they passed his street) went to park their bikes, Jess bit her lip, looking for Will.

"That's weird. I don't see him.

"I'm telling you, his mom's right. He probably just went to class early again." Lucas says, walking with the group.

"Yeah, he's always paranoid Gursky's gonna give him another pop quiz." Dustin laughs.

"Step right up, ladies and gentlemen."

Jess groans, turning to see Troy and his minion.

"Step right up and get your tickets for the freak show."

Jess rolls her eyes, squaring her jaw.

"Who do you think would make more money in a freak show?"

Troy walks up to the group.

"Midnight, Frogface, Toothless, or Bookworm?" he asks, hitting the each of them on the shoulder.

Jess rolled her eyes at her name.

It wasn't even an insult!

"I'd go with Toothless." his minion says, mimicking Dustin's slur.

Jess' hands turned into fists, her face going bright red in anger.

"I told you a million times, my teeth are coming in. It's called cleidocranial dysplasia." Dustin says, clearly getting tired of explaining his birth defect.

"I told you a million times." The minion continued to mimic.

"Do the arm thing."

Jess growled, her teeth baring.

"Do it, freak!"

Dustin sighs, removing his jacket.

He stretched out his arms, making it pop.

The boys groaned, wincing.

Jess rolled her eyes at them being overdramatic.

"God it gets me every time," Troy says, pushing Jess to the ground, causing her to groan.

"Jess! You alright?" Dustin asks, pulling her up.

She just glared at the direction Troy and his minion went.

"Fuckers." she hissed,

"Assholes." Lucas agreed.

Mike sighed, turning to Dustin.

"I think it's kinda cool. It's like you have superpowers or something," he says, causing Jess to nod her head in agreement.

"Like Mr. Fantastic."

"Yeah, except I can't fight evil with it," he says, causing Jess to roll her eyes.

"So? You're still cool to me," she says, causing Dustin to smile at her.

"Thanks, Jess."

X

The bell had rung, ending class.

"Remember, finish chapter 12 and answer 12.3 on the difference between an experiment and other forms of science investigation. This will be on the test, which will cover chapters 10 through 12. It will be multiple choice with an essay section." Mr. Clarke says, trailing off in the end when he noticed no one was listening or cared.

He turned to see the four kids standing excitedly at his desk, grinning ear to ear.

Jess was jumping up and down, her curls bouncing, grinning widely as her dimples showed, her freckle-covered nose scrunched up.

"So, did it come?" Mike asked.

Mr. Clarke sighed.

"Sorry, boys and young lady. I hate to be the bearer of bad news but..."

Jess' excitement melted away, bit by bit.

"...it came."

X

The four kids opened the door to the AV room, Jess squealing when she saw the radio.

"Yes!" Mike exclaimed.

"The Heathkit ham shack." Mr. Clarke says, smiling at Jess jumping up and down.

"Whoa." Mike sighed, smiling at it.

"Ain't she a beaut?"

"She's more than a beaut!" Jess exclaimed, grabbing the headphones and putting them on.

"I bet you can talk to New York on this thing."

"Think bigger." Mr. Clarke says.

"California?" Lucas asked.

"Bigger."

"Australia?"

Mr. Clarke nodded.

"¡¿QUÉ?! ¡NO!" Jess exclaimed.

"I'm not joking."

Jess shrieked in excitement.

"Oh, man! When Will sees this, he's totally going to blow his shit." Lucas exclaimed.

"Lucas!"

"Sorry."

Dustin chuckles as they turned it on, Jess and Mike leaning into the microphone.

"Hello, this is Mike Wheeler,"

"And this is Jess Hernandez."

"Co-presidents of Hawkins Middle AV Club." they both say in terrible Australian accents.

Dustin grabs the headphones from Jess' head, putting them on.

"What are you doing?" Lucas chuckled.

"Hello, this is Dustin, and this is the secretary and treasurer of Hawkins Middle AV Club. Do you eat kangaroos for breakfast?" Dustin asks, causing Jess to howl with laughter, leaning on Lucas who had grabbed the headphones for his turn.

They heard a knock on the door, causing the four kids to turn, Jess' excitement melting away when she saw the principal and Chief Hopper there.

"Sorry to interrupt, but, uh, may I borrow Michael, Lucas, Dustin, and Jessica?"

The boys and the girl all looked at each other, frowning.

X

Jess sighed as the boys tried to talk over each other.

This is what she suffers for being the only girl in the group.

"Okay, okay, okay. One at a time all right? You, since you're not being annoying." Chief Hopper says to Jess causing her to nod.

"You said he takes what?"

"Mirkwood," she answered, biting her lip.

"Mirkwood?"

"Yeah," Mike says, causing Jess to nod.

"Have you ever heard of Mirkwood?"

"I have not. That sounds made up to me." The cop next to him says, causing Jess to roll her eyes.

"No, it's from *Lord of the Rings*," Lucas says, causing Jess and Dustin to look at him.

"Well, *The Hobbit*." they both argued.

"It doesn't matter."

"He asked!" Jess argued.

"He asked!" Lucas mocked, in a terrible Spanish accent.

Jess turned bright red in anger as Dustin defended her beloved natural accent.

"Shut up, guys!" Mike said, who was between the two.

"Hey, hey, hey!"

"What'd I just say? One at a damn time. You."

"Mirkwood, it's a real road. It's just the name that's made up." Mike explained.

"It's where Cornwallis and Kerley meet." Jess continued.

"Yeah, all right, I think I know that-"

"We can show you if you want." Mike offered.

"I said that I know it!"

"We can help look," Jess says, looking at the boys.

"Yeah."

"No," Hopper says, looking at all of them.

The four kids started clamoring, demanding they help.

"No. After school, you are all to go home. Immediately."

Jess sighed in anger.

"That means no biking around looking for your friend, no investigating, no nonsense. This isn't some *Lord of the Rings* book."

"*The Hobbit*." Dustin corrects.

"Put a," Jess says, rolling her eyes.

"Shut up!" Lucas says, hitting Dustin in the chest.

"Hey!"

"Stop it!"

Jess and Mike looked at each other and rolled their eyes at their childish demeanor.

She was just as passionate about *The Hobbit* like Dustin however, there were more important things to worry about.

Will is missing.

"Do I make myself clear?"

Chief Hopper got up, glaring at the four kids.

"Do I make myself...clear?"

"Yes, sir."

"Yeah."

Jess sighs before looking at the Chief.

"Si Señor," she says, frowning.

3. Chapter 3

Summary for the Chapter:

On their attempt to find Will, they find a girl with a shaved head, shivering in the cold. One look at each other and Mike and Jess come to an agreement to help this girl.

Jess was eating with Wheeler family, looking towards Mike with a worried glance.

They decided to have a sleepover since Jess' parents had gone off to a business meeting and would be back by tomorrow afternoon.

"We should be out there right now. We should be helping look for him." Mike argued, Jess nodding in agreement.

"We've been over this, Mike. The Chief says-"

"Screw what the Chief says!" Jess argued.

"Yeah! I don't care what the Chief said." Mike says, agreeing.

"Michael and Jessica!"

"We have to something. Will could be in danger."

"More reason to stay put."

"Mom!"

"Mrs. Wheeler!"

"End of discussion," she says, causing Jess to huff in anger, looking at Mike who shared her frustration.

"So...me and Barbara are gonna study at her house tonight. That's cool, right?" Nancy says, looking at her mom, causing Jess to look at Mike and roll her blue eyes, clearly hearing 'bullshit' from her sentence.

"No, not cool."

Jess and Mike smirked at each other, enjoying Nancy's misfortune together.

"What? Why not?"

"Why do you think? Am I speaking Chinese in this house? Until we know Will is okay, no one leaves."

"This is such bullshit."

"Language."

"So, we're under house arrest? Just because Mike and Jess' friend got lost on the way home from-"

"Wait, this is Will's fault?" Mike asked angrily.

"Oh my god you're such a bitch!" Jess exclaimed.

"Language."

"Nancy, take that back." Mrs. Wheeler warned.

"No!"

Jess flips her off, her face turning red in anger.

"You're just pissed off 'cause you wanna hang out with Steve," Mike calls her out, causing Jess to snort.

"Steve?"

"Who's Steve?"

"Her new boyfriend, that's who," Jess says.

"Colombian Whore!" Nancy yells.

"Language!"

Jess froze, her jaw dropping.

Mike glared at his sister.

Jess got up from the table, glaring at Nancy who just registered what she said but refused to apologize.

"Put a." she hissed, flipping her off as tears started to stream down her cheeks as she stormed to the basement.

"Look what you did you racist jerk," Mike growled at Nancy who rolled her eyes and left the table.

"Nancy, come back. Come back."

Mrs. Wheeler sighed and comforted Holly, who seemed to almost break into tears.

"You see, Michael? You see what happens?"

"What happens with what? Jess and I are the only ones acting normal here! We're the only ones who care about Will! And I'm the only one who seems to remember that Jess is extremely sensitive to people insulting her Spanish background!" Mike yelled.

"That is really unfair, son. We care."

Mike just had enough, getting up and leaving to the basement to check on Jess.

"Mike!"

"Let him go."

X

Jess was sobbing on the couch, Mike frowning at her as she laid her head on his shoulder.

"I hate it when people call me that...she knows that," Jess says, gasping as more tears run down her cheeks.

"I told you when she's always been a jerk, she's always been a jerk." Mike sighed.

Jess shrugged, sniffing.

"I remember a time I used to consider her my sister. Now she's just a bitch that abandons a friend once they get popular."

She chuckled, wiping her eyes.

"Thanks for listening to me rant Mike, you're like a true brother to me."

Mike smiles at Jess.

"And you're like the sister I WISHED my sister was like. A bit more understanding."

She chuckled, smiling at the freckled boy.

X

"Lucas, do you copy? It's Mike. Lucas?"

"Hey, it's Lucas."

Jess rolls her eyes and takes her Supercomm.

"We know it's you. This is Jess here. And say 'over' when you're done talking so we know when you're done. Over."

"I'm done. Over." Lucas replies back sarcastically.

"We're worried about Will. Over." Mike says in his.

They hear Lucas sigh.

"Yeah. This is crazy. Over."

"I was thinking...Will could've cast Protection last night, but he didn't. He cast Fireball. Over." Mike continued.

"What's your point? Over."

Jess sighs before answering through hers.

"His point is...he could've played it safe, but he didn't. He put himself in danger to help the party. Over."

Lucas hesitated before answering.

"Meet me in 10. Over and out."

The three of them slid their antennas down and they both took supplies from the basement, shoving them in their backpacks.

They both left through the basement, grabbing onto their bikes and leaving the house.

But Mike turned to see Steve Harrington getting to Nancy's window.

Jess noticed and rolled her eyes, telling Mike to come on.

X

The boys had caught up with the two, riding their bikes to Mirkwood.

"Ah, man. This is it." Lucas says, causing all of them to stop.

They got out of their bikes, Dustin looking up when thunder was being heard.

"You guys. You feel that?"

Jess looks to Dustin who was wiping a raindrop from his face.

"I think maybe we should go back."

"No. We're not going back. Just stay close." Mike says, putting his bike aside.

"Come on," Jess says, following Mike.

"Just stay on channel six. Don't do anything stupid." Mike calls as Lucas followed behind Jess.

Dustin hesitated before his eyes landed on Jess' bouncing brown curls.

"Hey, guys! Wait up!"

He runs up to them, Jess smiling at him.

"Wait up!"

"We are Dustin!" she giggles.

X

"WILL!" Jess screamed, her hair sticking to her face as the rain poured on her and the boys.

"Will!"

"Will!"

"Byers!"

"I've got your X-Men 134!"

"WILL!" Jess screamed again.

"Guys, I really think we should turn back," Dustin says, causing Jess to turn to the boy.

"Dustin, really?!"

"Seriously, Dustin?" Lucas says, agreeing with Jess.

"You wanna be a baby, then go home already."

"Lucas Sinclair!" Jess exclaimed.

"What?!"

"Don't call him a baby! I'm also scared!"

"Yeah! Besides, I'm just being realistic, Lucas." Dustin argued.

"No, you're just being a big sissy!"

"Did you ever think Will went missing because he ran into something bad? And we're going to the exact same spot where he was last seen? And we have no weapons or anything?" Dustin asked.

Jess frowned, furrowing her eyebrows.

"Dustin, shut up," Mike says before Jess could voice on how he made a good point.

"I'm just saying, does that seem smart to you?"

"Shut up. Shut up. Did you guys hear that?"

There was rustling, causing all of them to gasp, Jess grabbing onto Dustin's free hand, her flashlight shaking in her other hand.

There was more rustling, causing them to turn their flashlights, Jess' gasp of shock at what they saw.

A kid their age in a huge yellow t-shirt shivering and breathing heavily.

Jess and Mike looked at each other before looking back to the kid, who now Jess had a good look at looked like a girl.

And for some reason...

Both her and Mike wanted to help her.

4. Chapter 4

Summary for the Chapter:

The girl, now known as 'Eleven', earns two new nicknames from Mike and Jess and learns what 'Spanish' is.

They were all back at Mike's house, surrounding the girl that had on Mike's jacket and was sitting on the couch in the basement.

"Is there a number we can call for your parents?" Mike asked, looking genuinely worried.

"Where's your hair? Do you have cancer?" Dustin asked.

"Did you run away?" Lucas asked.

"Are you in some kind of trouble?" Jess asked calmly, looking at the girl sympathetically.

"Is that blood?"

Lucas reached out to touch the red stain on her shirt.

Mike hit his arm back.

"Stop it! You're freaking her out!"

"She's freaking me out!"

"I bet she's deaf."

Dustin claps loudly, causing the girl to flinch.

"Not deaf."

"All right, that's enough, all right? She's just scared and cold." Mike says, leaving to get some clothes.

When thunder rumbled loudly, she gasped, flinching.

"Hey, you're okay," Jess reassured her, causing the girl to look at her, making Jess smile gently.

"Here, these are clean. Okay?" Mike says, handing her a sweatshirt and a pair of sweatpants.

She takes them, rubbing her face on it comfortingly.

She puts them aside, taking off the jacket Mike gave her and reached to pull off the shirt.

"No, no, no!" Jess and Mike exclaimed, keeping the shirt down as Lucas and Dustin looked away.

"Oh my god. Oh my god." Dustin exclaimed.

"See over there? Th-That's the bathroom. Privacy. Get it?" Mike says, looking at the girl.

The girl looked to Jess who gave a small smile, beckoning her to follow her.

The girl grabbed the clothes Mike gave her and followed Jess with Mike behind her.

Once she entered the bathroom, Mike was closing the door when the girl turned around and stopped him.

"You don't want it closed?" Mike asked Jess next to him.

"No."

Jess grinned.

"She speaks!"

"Oh, so you can speak. Okay, well..." Mike trailed off, looking to Jess.

"How about we just keep the door..." Jess says, Mike, closing the door until there was reasonable about still open.

"Just like this," Mike says, Jess, nodding in confirmation.

"That better?" Jess asked, looking at the girl.

"Yes."

They both nod, smiling at her.

X

"This is mental." Dustin sighed.

"At least she can talk." Mike defended her.

"I can confirm that." Jess agreed.

"She said 'no' and 'yes'. Mike's three-year-old sister says more." Lucas argued.

"She tried to get naked," Dustin says.

"There's something seriously wrong with her. Like wrong in the head." Lucas says.

"That's rude Sinclair." Jess snapped.

"It's true," Lucas argued.

"She just went like..." Dustin says, motioning with his hands what the girl was doing, making his hat fall off.

"I bet she escaped from Pennhurst," Lucas says,

"From where?" Mike asked.

"The nuthouse in Kerley County."

"You got a lot of family there?" Dustin asked, making Jess snort in amusement.

"Bite me." Lucas threatened.

"Seriously though, think about it. That would explain her shaved hair and why she's so crazy."

"Why she went like..." Dustin says, motioning what the girl did again.

"She's an escapee is the point. She's probably a psycho."

"Like Michael Myers," Dustin suggested.

"Exactly! We should've never brought her here."

"So you just wanted to leave her out in that storm?" Mike asked, Jess, crossing her arms, making her point clear she was on Mike's side.

"Yes! We went out to find Will, not another problem."

"I think we should tell your mom," Dustin suggested.

"I second that."

"You guys are such putas I swear!" Jess exclaimed.

"Who's crazy now?" Mike says, agreeing with Jess.

"How is that crazy?"

"How is that- We weren't supposed to be out tonight, remember?" Jess exclaimed.

"So?"

"So, if I tell my mom, and she tells your mom and your mom, and her mom when her parents are back tomorrow..."

"Oh, man." Dustin groans.

"Our houses become Alcatraz," Lucas muttered.

"Exactly! We'll never find Will." Jess sighed.

"All right, here's the plan. She sleeps here tonight." Mike says.

"You're letting a girl that isn't Jess-"

"Just listen! In the morning, she sneaks around my house and goes to the front door and rings my doorbell. My mom will answer and know exactly what to do. She'll send her back to Pennhurst or wherever she comes from. We'll be totally in the clear. And tomorrow night, we go back out. And this time, we find Will." Mike says, causing Jess to nod.

"Now, I second this." She says, glaring at the boys to dare say otherwise.

X

Jess and Mike were handing the girl blankets and pillows for her to sleep on as well as Mike's sleeping bag in a fort they made for her.

Dustin watched as Jess had a huge smile as the girl took the blankets from her, smiling at her as well.

"Mental." He says before following Lucas.

"Hey, um, we never asked your name," Mike says, Jess nodding.

The girl looked at Jess and Mike before revealing her arm, that had 011 on it.

Jess gasped, looking towards the girl.

"Is that real?" Mike asked, reaching over to touch it.

She flinched away, making Mike look up at her.

"Sorry, I've just...never seen a kid with a tattoo before," Mike says, smiling sheepishly.

"What's it mean? Eleven?" Jess asked.

The girl points at herself.

"That's your name?" Mike asked.

She nodded.

"Unique," Jess says, smiling at Eleven.

"Eleven. Okay. Well, my name's Mike, short for Michael."

"And my name's Jess, short for Jessica," Jess says, smiling at her.

"Maybe we can call you El, short for Eleven," Mike suggested.

Eleven nods, agreeing to it.

"Um, well, okay. Night, El."

"Night, Mike."

"I'll join you soon okay Mike? I wanna talk to her for a bit more. I won't be long okay?" Jess says Mike nodding.

"Ok."

Jess smiled at El, who watched the girl.

"You know, I never really talked to another girl before since I move to Hawkins," Jess confessed, making El smile a bit.

"Mike and the boys are like my brothers in a way. We look out for each other. Hopefully, we can be like sisters. I never had one before."

El nods, hoping for the same thing.

Jess smiled before sighing.

"Your name's Eleven, right?"

El nods.

"Well, Mike gave you your nickname for everyone to use, how about I give you my own kind of nickname?"

El nods again.

"How about, 'Once'? It's Eleven in Spanish."

"Spanish?"

"It's a different language. Kinda like English but...different." Jess explained.

El nods, liking it.

Jess smiled.

"Ok then. Buenas Noches Once."

El hesitated before replying.

"Buenas Noches Jess."

Jess smiled before drawing the blanket to close the fort.

5. Chapter 5

Summary for the Chapter:

Jess feels a need to look after Eleven after it's revealed that bad people are after her, and Mike feels the same.

"Make sure you get some for El alright?" Jess whispered to Mike as they waited for the Eggos to pop up.

Mike nodded.

"I know."

Jess smiled, looking at the basement.

"What did you two talk about?"

"Nothing much, really. It's a shame she has to leave. I would like to have another girl in the party." Jess mumbled, causing Mike to smile sadly at her.

"I know. If the circumstances weren't dire, I would have welcomed her to the party once we got to know her a bit more." Mike agreed.

"I have my own nickname for her too, though, only I can call her it," Jess says, smirking at Mike.

"Really? What is it?"

"Once." She replied.

Mike rolls his eyes and Jess giggles.

"How original."

The Eggos popup, Mike taking two of them and shoving them in his jacket pocket.

They each take two Eggos and put them on their plates.

X

Mike makes sure Jess sits next to him at the end of the table and not in the middle between him and Nancy because Jess was still upset about Nancy's comment about her yesterday night.

They both shove their Eggos into their mouths, so they can greet El good morning and give her breakfast.

"Slow down, Mike and Jess. That's disgusting."

While Jess refused to reply and just flips her off, Mike glared at Nancy.

"Do a lot of studying last night?"

"Yeah, actually, I did."

"What was your test on again? Human Anatomy?"

Jess giggled softly as Nancy kicked his leg and he kicked her leg back.

"Hey, what's going on?"

They both look at Mrs. Wheeler.

"Nothing."

Jess sips on her cup of OJ, winking at Mike who just smiles and rolls his eyes.

X

The two pulls up the blanket that was covering the fort and found Eleven playing with Mike's supercomm.

"Hey, you found my supercomm. Pretty cool huh?" Mike says, smiling at her.

She looks up to see Jess and looks back down at the supercomm.

"I talk to my friends with it. Mostly Lucas and Jess 'cause they live so close. Signal's pretty weak."

"Yeah, it really is." Jess chuckled.

Eleven looked at Mike who gets the Eggos and hands them to her.

"Got you breakfast." He says, Jess smiling as El took a bite out of the waffle.

"So listen, this is gonna sound a little weird, but I just need you to go out there. Then go to the front door and ring the doorbell. My mom will answer and you'll tell her that you're lost and that you need help. But whatever you do, you can't tell her about last night or that you know us. Understand?"

Jess looked at Eleven, biting her lip.

"It's actually no big deal. Once, we'll just pretend to meet each other again. And Mike's mom, she'll know who to call." Jess assures the girl.

Eleven looked at the two before replying.

"No."

Jess furrowed her eyebrows in confusion.

"No?" Mike asked, equally confused.

Eleven shook her head.

"No."

"No...you don't want my mom to get help?"

Eleven looks back up at Mike, shaking her head.

Jess got closer to the girl, and Eleven looked at the girl's blue eyes.

"You're in trouble, aren't you?" Jess says quietly, looking at Eleven's brown eyes.

Eleven frowned, looking down and up at her again.

"Who...who are you in trouble with?" Mike asked.

Eleven looked scared, as if what she might say will hurt them.

"Bad." She whispered.

Jess frowned, still a bit confused.

"Bad? Bad people?" Mike asked.

Eleven nodded, causing Jess to widen her eyes, in fear.

But not for herself, but for the wellbeing of Eleven.

"They want to hurt you?" Mike asked, Jess biting her lip in worry.

"The bad people?" Jess asked.

Then Eleven did something unpredictable.

She made a finger gun and pointed it at herself, to Mike, and finally at Jess.

Jess gasped, her voice cracking, her hand covering her mouth.

Eleven put it down, frowning apologetically at Jess but asking;

"Understand?"

Jess let in a deep breath and unwilling to trust her voice, she nodded.

"Michael and Jessica, where are you? We're going to be late. Let's go!"

"All right, We'll be back. Just stay here, okay? Stay here."

As they got up and out of the basement, Jess grabbed Mike and gasped through her tears.

"M-Mike she's our age and she has people, BAD people who want to kill her and anyone who helps her! I-"

"I know Jess, I know. It shocks me as well. But, are you still in on helping her?"

She gave him an 'are you fucking serious?' look.

"This just gave me more reason to protect her! We're skipping today." Jess says, Mike nodding.

"I agree."

Jess sighed.

"I wish we could tell the boys but, Lucas doesn't seem to trust her. I get where he's coming from, but there's no reason to act so mean."

Mike nods as they walk outside, getting on their bikes.

"Let's go so we can trick my parents that we're going to school."

Jess nods, both of them riding their bikes in silence.

X

Back at school, Dustin and Lucas had sat at their desks.

"Oh, this is weird," Dustin says, looking over to see the seat next to him and the seat next to Lucas were empty.

"They're never this late."

"I'm telling you, his stupid plan failed," Lucas says, rolling his eyes.

"I thought you liked his plan."

"Yeah, but obviously it was stupid, or he'd be here. Jess too, if she wasn't staying at his place the night."

"If his mom found out a girl that wasn't Jess spent the night-" Dustin says, imagining the worse.

"He's in deep shit right about now."

"Hey, what if she slept naked?"

"Oh my God, she didn't. If Jess were here she'd flip you off."

"Oh, if Mrs. Wheeler tells my parents..." Dustin groaned.

"No way. Mike would never rat us out. And Jess has a major cr-" Lucas froze, knowing he wouldn't live to see another day if Jess found out he told Dustin she had a major crush on him.

"And Jess wouldn't either."

"I don't know."

"All that matters is, after school, the freak will be back in the loony bin, and we can focus on what really matters, finding Will."

Dustin sighs, looking back at the empty seat next to him that would normally be seated by Jess.

6. Chapter 6

Summary for the Chapter:

Mike, Jess, and Eleven become a trio of best friends in the span of a couple hours.

Mrs. Wheeler's car drove past, Mike and Jess waiting till it was clear before they rode back to Mike's house.

"Ok, let's head back," Jess says, riding down the hill, Mike following behind her.

X

"You want anything to drink?" Mike asked Eleven who was following the pair around the house.

"We have OJ, skim milk....what else?"

"Water?" Jess teased, causing a smile to appear on Eleven's lips as Mike rolls his eyes.

She headed into the living room, looking at the TV.

"Um, we have..."

Mike turned and smiled as Eleven studied the TV with her eyes.

"Oh, this is my living room."

"It's mostly just for watching TV. Nice right? It's 22-inch."

"That's like ten times bigger than Dustin's." Jess giggled, Mike nodding.

Eleven walked up to the family pictures, looking at one of Nancy.

"Pretty." She smiled.

Jess rolls her eyes as Mike frowned.

"I guess."

"She's still a bitch," Jess mutters.

"That's my sister Nancy, and that's baby Holly, and those are my parents," Mike says as Eleven went through each of the pictures.

"What are your parents like?" Mike asked, not getting an answer.

"Do they live close?"

Eleven stayed quiet, now interested in the chair.

"That's a La-Z-Boy," Jess says, smiling at Eleven's curious nature.

"It's where my dad sleeps. You can try it if you want." Mike says, Eleven now looking at him.

Eleven sits on the chair, Jess kneeling down, ready to pull it back.

"Just trust me, okay?"

Eleven nods, tensing for what was about to happen.

Suddenly, the chair pulls back, causing Eleven to gasp.

Mike and Jess chuckle while Eleven laughs nervously.

It didn't feel bad, the rush just felt so...sudden.

"See? Fun, right?" Mike says, grinning at Eleven who was smiling at him and Jess.

Mike sets it back up, Eleven watching him carefully.

"Now you try," Jess says, smiling at her.

Eleven leans and pulls the handle, causing the chair to pull back.

The three laugh, Jess burying her face into Mike's shoulder as her laughs became stronger and uneasy to control, Mike laughing at her trying to control her laughter.

Eleven giggles, relaxing and having fun with her new friends.

X

Mike slams the Yoda figure on the table, grunting weirdly.

"Ready are you? What knows you of ready?" he mimics, making Jess burst out laughing.

"His name's Yoda," Mike says, holding the figure.

"He can use the Force to move things with his mind, like this," Jess says, pushing the toys off the board.

Eleven looked uninterested about the information and looked over to see Mike's trophies.

"Oh, this is my dinosaur, Rory. Look he has a speaker in his mouth so he can roar."

The dinosaur roared, making Jess roll her eyes, looking to see Eleven had stood up, walking over to where Mike's trophies were.

They both got up, walking over to Eleven who was looking at all the trophies.

"Oh, these are all my science fair trophies," Mike says, Jess smiling at each of them.

"Some of them were won when I moved here a few years ago. 5 years, to be exact." Jess says, recognizing a trophy that was on Mike's stand from her first science fair with the boys.

She had a few trophies of her own back at her place.

"Yeah, we got first every year."

"Well, except for last year when we got third. Mr. Clarke said it was totally political." Jess says, rolling her eyes.

Eleven stared at a picture of the boys and Jess holding a trophy, all of them smiling.

Mike notices that she's staring at the picture, causing him to glance at it.

She pointed at Will, causing Jess to gasp.

"You know Will?" Mike asks, looking at Eleven.

"Did you see him? Last night? On the road?" Jess asked.

No answer.

The three turned when they heard a vehicle approaching, causing Jess to gasp.

Mike walks up to the window, seeing his mother's car pulling up in the driveway.

"We gotta go," Mike says, grabbing Eleven's hand.

"Shit!" Jess cursed, grabbing Eleven's other hand.

Eleven tensed, but relaxed when she felt that the way they were holding onto her and pulling her towards the stairs was protective.

"I bought pizza and macaroni." Mrs. Wheeler says, opening the door, causing Mike and Jess to freeze.

Mike and Jess pull Eleven back up the stairs, knowing that they were screwed.

"Ted? Is that you?"

"Just me, Mom!"

"And me, Mrs. Wheeler!" Jess says, giving Mike a look before he could shoot her an 'are you kidding me?' look.

"Mike? Jess? What're you doing home?"

"One second!" Mike yelled.

They pull Eleven back into Mike's room, Jess closing the door as Mike

opens the closet door.

"In here. We'll be right back, okay?"

"Please, you have to get in, or Mike's mom, she'll find you. Do you understand?"

Eleven hesitated.

"We won't tell her about you. We promise." Mike reassures her, Jess nodding.

"Promise?"

"It means something you can't break. Ever." Jess says, Mike nodding.

"Michael? Jessica?"

They all look at the door and back at each other.

"Please?" Mike and Jess whispered.

Eleven sighed, deciding to brave her fear just to make sure to stay

hidden.

She walked into the closet, freezing when Mike started to close the door.

"It's going to be alright Once, ok? We'll be back, I promise." Jess says, Mike closing the door.

Eleven gasps, breathing shakily.

X

"I just...I don't feel good." Mike lied, Jess nodding.

"I woke up and my head, it really hurt bad, and my throat was all scratchy, and I wanted to tell you, but the last time I told you I was sick, you made me go to school anyway, and-"

"Michael."

"Yeah?"

"I'm not mad at you."

Jess widened her eyes, not believing it.

She hadn't even said her excuse yet!

"No?"

"No, of course not."

Jess sighed in relief, looking up the stairs, biting her lip.

"All this that's been going on with Will, I can't imagine what's it been like for you. For the both of you."

Jess smiles weakly at Mrs. Wheeler, playing with her thumbs.

"It's been hard," she admits, not lying.

Mike sighs, looking at Jess.

"I just...I want you to feel like you can talk to me." Mrs. Wheeler says, making Mike look back at her.

"I never want you to feel like you have to hide anything from me. I'm

here for you. For both of you. Okay?"

Mike and Jess nodded.

A thud was heard, making Jess jump, her eyes widening.

"Once..." she whispered under her breath.

"Is there someone else here?"

Mike and Jess look back at her.

"No."

X

Jess rushed to Mike's room, Mike following behind her and closing the door and locking it.

"Eleven? Is everything okay? El?"

Jess opened the closet door, gasping when she saw Eleven sitting, her knees pulled to her chest, crying.

"Once..." Jess whispered.

"Mike...Jess..."

"Is everything okay?" Mike asked, Jess rubbing Eleven's shoulder comfortingly.

Eleven gasps, nodding.

Jess had kept her promise and by the looks of it, Mike also did with his.

"Are you sure?" Jess asked.

Eleven nods, smiling weakly.

"Promise."

7. Chapter 7

Summary for the Chapter:

Eleven reveals she has telekinetic powers, to Jess and the boys surprise and learn what 'friend' means.

Lucas and Dustin stared at Eleven who had been laughing at whatever Jess was saying (a joke about Mike) who now looked at them, frowning suddenly.

Jess looks up when she heard the door close and widens her eyes at the sight of the two boys.

She gets up, smiling at Eleven before returning to her glare, crossing her arms, ready to defend her new best friend.

"Are you two out of your minds?"

"Just listen to us," Mike says.

"That's not a question," Jess added.

"You two are out of your minds!"

"She knows about Will," Jess says.

"What do you mean she knows about Will?" Dustin asks her, making Jess drop her glare.

Lucas rolls his eyes at the sight of her softening her look.

Mike walks over to the picture Eleven had pointed and holds it.

"She pointed at him, at his picture," he says.

"She knew he was missing. I could tell." Jess adds.

"You could tell?"

"Just think about it. Do you really think it was a coincidence that we found her on Mirkwood, the same place Will disappeared?" Jess asked, looking at Dustin.

"That is weird," Dustin admitted.

"And she said bad people are after her." Jess continued, her voice cracking softly.

"We think maybe these bad people are the same ones that took Will," Mike says, Jess nodding.

"We think she knows what happened to him," Jess adds.

"Then why doesn't she tell us?" Lucas asked.

He glared at her, walking towards her.

"Do you know where he is?"

No answer.

Lucas grabbed her shoulders, Eleven's eyes widening in shock and fear.

"Do you know where Will is?!" he yelled at her.

"Get off her! ¡Putá!" Jess yelled, her Spanish accent growling, as she yanked Lucas off Eleven.

"Stop it! You're scaring her!" Mike yelled.

"She should be scared!" Lucas yelled back.

Mike looked at Eleven who seemed to look terrified under Lucas' yelling.

"If you know where he is, tell us!"

Eleven looked as if she was about to cry, Lucas sighing and yanked out of Jess' grip, her glaring at the boy who scared her best friend.

"This is nuts! We have to take her to your mom."

"No! Eleven said telling any adult would put us in danger." Mike says, Jess standing next to him.

"I can confirm that."

"What kind of danger?" Dustin asked.

"Her name is Eleven?" Lucas asked.

"El for short," Mike says.

"I call her 'Once'," Jess adds.

"Mike, what kind of danger?" Dustin asked again.

"Danger, danger!" Mike answered for him, nodding at Jess.

She formed a finger gun and pointed it at Dustin's head, who widened his eyes in fear and then at Lucas who hit her arm down.

"No, no, no! We're going back to plan A. We're telling your mom."

"Don't you fucking dare!" Jess yelled, grabbing Lucas' arm.

He pushed her down, causing Dustin to catch her.

Lucas opened the door, only for it to slam closed.

Confused, he opened it again for it to slam closed again, this time, the lock turning.

Shocked, the four turned to see Eleven, blood trickling down her nose.

"No."

Jess played with her meatloaf, what Mrs. Wheeler said a few hours earlier when she called her still ringing in her head.

"Your parents called to let us know that the meeting is taking longer than expected and they won't be back until the end of the week. You better ride back to your place so you can get extra clothes since you're staying with us until they come back, alright? They're really sorry Jessica."

She sighed, putting down her fork.

"Something wrong with the meatloaf?"

Mike looked at Jess empathetically, as did Dustin and Lucas, when she didn't want to answer her question.

"Oh, no, I had two bologna sandwiches for lunch. I don't know why." Dustin suddenly said, causing Jess to look up at him.

Lucas chuckled.

"Me, too."

They smiled sadly at her, and she returned the smile.

They may not agree with each other, but they're still best friends.

"It's delicious, Mommy," Nancy says, making Jess roll her eyes.

"Thank you, sweetie."

Mike sighs and grabs his cup of milk.

"So, there's this...special assembly thing tonight...for Will at the school field."

"Oh, so NOW you care about him?" Jess questioned her.

Ignoring her, Nancy continued.

"Barb's driving."

"Why am I just hearing about this?"

"I thought you knew."

"I told you, I don't want you after dark until Will is found."

"I know, I know but it'd be super weird if I'm not there. I mean, everyone's going."

Jess rolled her eyes, knowing this was just an excuse to see the asshole, Steve Herrington.

"Just...be back by 10:00."

Nancy nodded, going back to her meatloaf.

"Why don't you take the boys and Jess, too?"

Mike and Jess looked up.

"No!"

"Mmm-mmm."

"Don't you think you should be there? For Will?"

Jess looked up and froze when she saw Eleven walk down the stairs from Mrs. Wheeler's shoulder.

"Once..."

Confused about what she said, Mike turned to see Eleven and choked on his milk.

Mrs. Wheeler was about to turn when Dustin slammed his fists on the table, catching her attention from Eleven.

"Sorry. Spasm."

Jess giggled, smiling at Dustin who shrank in his chair, smiling guiltily.

X

Eleven was playing with Mike's Supercomm, changing the channel.

"El?"

"¿Once?"

She looked up to see Mike and Jess walk in with the boys, Mike holding a tray and Jess holding a glass of milk.

"No adults. Just us and some meatloaf." Mike says, setting the tray down.

"And some leche," Jess says, giggling at Mike who rolled his eyes as she set down the glass.

Eleven looked up to see Dustin and Lucas watching her.

"Don't worry. They won't tell anyone about you." Jess says, smiling.

"They promise. Right?" Mike says, looking at them.

"We never would've upset you if we knew you had superpowers," Dustin says, causing Jess to walk over and whack him in the head.

"Ow!"

"Idiot." she sighs, smiling at him.

Eleven noticed how different she acted towards Dustin than at Mike and Lucas.

"What Dustin is trying to say is that they were just scared...earlier. That's all." Mike says.

"And not just at you," Jess adds, glaring at them.

Eleven giggles as the boy's fearful faces.

"We just wanted to find our friend," Lucas said.

"Friend?" Eleven asks, confused.

"Yeah, friend. Will?"

"What is 'friend'?"

"Is she serious?" Lucas asked, getting a glare from Jess.

"Uh, a friend-"

"Is someone you'd do anything for." Mike interrupts, looking at Eleven.

"You protect them from anything that seems threatening to that person," Jess adds, smiling at the telekinetic girl.

"You lend them your cool stuff, like comic books and trading cards," Dustin adds.

"And they never break a promise." Mike continues.

"Never," Jess says, shaking her head.

"Especially when there's spit."

"Spit?"

"A spit swear means..."

Lucas spits into his hand and grabbed Dustin's hand, causing Jess to giggle at Dustin's horrified face.

"You never break your word. It's a bond."

"That's super important, because friends...they tell each other things. Things parents don't know."

Eleven looked down.

"Another thing about friends is that no matter if we get into fights or arguments, we always make things right. Because, friends are also like siblings." Jess says, making Lucas, Dustin and Mike smile and nod, agreeing.

Eleven watched the four, witnessing the strong bond they all had with each other.

She smiled, wanting the same thing.

8. Chapter 8

Summary for the Chapter:

Jess gets a bad dream and goes to the basement to sleep with Eleven, who gives her a nickname only she could use.

The boys were talking about something that Jess didn't really care to listen in to and just watched Eleven walk up to the board where they played Dungeons and Dragons.

She sat where Mike usually sits when they were playing, making her become confused, walking up to her.

"What's the weirdo doing?" Lucas asked, earning a glare and the finger from Jess as she sat on the chair to Eleven's right.

Eleven closed her eyes, making Jess furrow her eyebrows, looking at Dustin in confusion and he gave her the same look.

What was Eleven doing?

"El?" Mike asked, Jess looking up to see Mike looking at Eleven carefully.

Eleven opened her eyes and took the figure that Will used for DnD.

"Will."

Jess widened her eyes, knowing fully well that NONE of them told Eleven which pieces belonged to who when they were playing.

"Superpowers," Dustin says.

Lucas looked at Dustin and shook his head, rolling his eyes.

Mike sat on the chair to Eleven's left, looking at her.

"Did you see him? On Mirkwood?" he asked, looking at her gently.

"Do you know where he is?" Jess asked, looking at Eleven as well.

Eleven looked to Jess and then to Mike then back at the board.

She knocked all the pieces except for Will's piece and another one.

She flipped the board over and placed Will's piece on it.

"I don't understand," Mike says.

"Me neither," Jess mutters, looking at the board in confusion.

"Hiding."

"Will is hiding?" Mike asked.

Eleven nodded, making Jess look up at Dustin who shared her bewildered look.

"From the bad men?" Jess asked, causing Eleven to shake her head.

"Then from who?" Mike asked.

Eleven got the other piece and placed on the board.

Jess gasped, getting up abruptly.

"T-That's the Demogorgon piece!"

Mike looked up at Jess with fear and shock in his eyes, Dustin had his hands on his head, sighing shakily.

X

Jess widened her eyes, gasping.

She wiped her face, sighing.

Another damn dream about the immigration from Bogotá to Miami to Hawkins.

It wasn't like she had anything to be scared of anymore, her parents legalized everything two years ago.

But, still, the fear of being taken back to Colombia...

It still ran fresh in her mind.

She got up, careful not to wake the boys and left Mike's room.

She tiptoed downstairs, being careful in her steps as she heard Mr. Wheeler's snoring.

She opened the basement door and closed it, walking down.

She looked over at the pillow fort and sighed.

"¿Once?"

"Jess?"

She walked over to the pillow fort and pulled up the blanket that acted like the 'door' to the pillow fort, revealing Eleven laying down, a tired expression on her face.

"I uh..."

Jess' cheeks flamed red.

"I had a bad dream...can I sleep with you?"

Eleven frowned, looking at the girl's blue eyes.

She also had her fair share of bad dreams but never had anyone to comfort her.

She nodded.

Jess smiled before getting in, letting the blanket hide them.

She laid down next to Eleven, looking at her.

"Pretty."

Jess furrowed her eyebrows.

"Huh?"

Eleven reached out to Jess' face, careful not to poke her eyes.

"Eyes. Pretty."

Jess scoffs lightly.

"Maybe, but you?"

Jess reached out and touched Eleven's face.

"You're beautiful."

Eleven smiles.

"Thank you. Jessie."

Jess froze, her eyes widening.

"Huh?"

"Jessie. You."

"Jessie...that's your nickname for me?"

"Yes...only me."

Jess laughs lightly, nodding.

"Like how only I can call you 'Once', only you can call me 'Jessie'? I like it."

Eleven smiled.

Jess sighed, yawning.

"Buenas noches Once."

Eleven yawned as well, subconsciously grabbing onto Jess' hand.

"Buenas noches Jessie."

X

"Where is she?"

Dustin had woken up to see that the sleeping bag that usually is inhabited by Jess was empty.

Freaking out, he woke up Mike and Lucas.

"Maybe she's downstairs in the basement. You know how close she and El are now. They're literally attached to the hip." Mike says, though, he was also a bit worried as well.

Just to calm their nerves, they went down to the basement, looking to the pillow fort.

Mike pulled up the blanket and covered his mouth, resisting the urge

to burst out laughing.

Eleven and Jess were hugging each other in their sleep, Eleven's arms and legs wrapped around Jess' body, whose arms were around Eleven's waist and cradling her buzzcut head.

"Well...they look comfortable," Dustin says, relieved that Jess was safe, but still found the scene hilarious.

Lucas rolled his eyes, shaking his head at the sight of the two girls.

"Come on Lucas, you have to admit it's cute," Mike says, looking at Lucas.

He sighed, rolling his eyes.

"Okay, fine I'll admit it...It's kinda cute."

Jess furrowed her eyebrows, yawning.

She opened her eyes, blinking rapidly.

She turned and looked over to see the boys and immediately rolled her eyes.

"Ok, yes I know this is funny to you but, I have my reasons for sleeping down here okay?"

"Well you can tell us later, you need to get dressed for school today."

"Ugh, fine. Let me just..."

Jess attempted to remove herself from the telekineses girl who had a strong grip on her.

The boys, rather than helping her, started to laugh.

"Shut up you assholes, you're going to wake Once up!" she hissed.

Mike, still chuckling, decided to help her, pulling Eleven's arms away from Jess' waist, helping her up.

"Jessie?"

Jess froze, sending a death glare to the boys.

"Nice job idiots."

She turned back to see Eleven watching her.

"Sorry El, I gotta go get changed for school, I'll come back down before we leave."

"Promise?"

"Promise."

Eleven nodded, smiling at her and then at Mike, waving at him.

"Hi, Mike."

"Hey, El. Sleep okay?"

"Yes. Jessie had a bad dream."

Jess flushed red, the boys looking at her, giving her worried glances.

"Later."

She smiled at Eleven again before walking up the stairs, Mike following behind her.

"So, Jessie-"

"Don't even think about it, Wheeler. Only Eleven has the right to call me that and she said that only she could so don't even for a SECOND think I'll let you pass calling me 'Jessie'. Got it?"

Mike freezes, gulping.

"Got it."

"Good."

9. Chapter 9

Summary for the Chapter:

Jess shows the boys her rifle and at school, she and Mike get hurt by Troy and his 'minion'.

Eleven was playing with Mike's Supercomm again while Mike, Lucas, Dustin, and Jess talked about how they were going to get Operation Mirkwood going.

"We just tell our parents we have AV Club after school. That'll give us at least a few hours for Operation Mirkwood."

"You seriously think that the weirdo knows where Will is?" Lucas asked, earning a smack in the head from Jess.

"Ow!"

"Don't call her a 'weirdo'," she growled.

"Just trust me on this, okay?" Mike says, giving Jess a grateful look for hitting Lucas for the 'weirdo' comment.

"Okay."

"Did you get the supplies?"

"Yeah. Binoculars...from Nam'. Army knife...also from 'Nam. Hammer, camouflage bandana...and the wrist rocket."

"You're gonna take out the Demogorgon with a slingshot?" Dustin asked, causing Jess to giggle.

"First of all, it's a wrist rocket. And second of all, the Demogorgon's not real. It's made up. But if there is something out there, I'm gonna shoot it in the eye..."

He flips it, causing the three to flinch.

"And blind it."

Mike sighs.

"Jess, what did you get?"

She smirks at Lucas before pulling out a rifle, the boys' eyes widening.

"Well, I for one think the Demogorgon exists and if it comes after us..."

Jess aims her rifle at Lucas, who jumps in fear.

"I'll blow it's fucking head off."

"Ok, put that down before you accidentally shoot someone."

Jess giggles and puts it away, making Mike sigh shakily before turning to Dustin.

"Dustin, what did you get?"

Dustin dumps out his backpack, which is full of snacks and junk food.

"Well, alrighty. So we've got..."

Jess giggles at Lucas and Mike's faces of 'are you kidding me?' towards Dustin.

"Nutty Bars, Bazooka, Pez, Smarties, Pringles, Nilla Wafers, apple, banana, and trail mix."

Mike and Lucas share a look and Jess bursts out laughing at their looks of 'he's not taking this seriously'.

"Seriously?" Lucas asked, glaring at Jess who covered her mouth, her eyes shut tightly as she tried to control her laughter.

"We need energy for our travels. For stamina."

"And I agree with you, Dustin," Jess says, grabbing his hat and placing it on her head.

"Hey!"

Jess giggles.

"Besides, why do we even need weapons anyways? We have her."

"She shut one door!" Lucas argued.

"With her mind!" Dustin exclaims, Jess tilting her head and raising her eyebrows as she nods.

"That is true," she admitted.

"See?! Are you kidding me? That's insane! Imagine all the other cool stuff she could do."

He looked up thinking of something.

"Like..."

He grabbed a spaceship, bringing it over.

"I bet...she could make this fly!"

He turns to Eleven, her looking up at Dustin carefully.

"Hey. Hey. Okay, concentrate. Okay?"

He drops it, making it fall.

"Ok, one more time."

Jess giggles as Eleven gave a disinterested look, clearly not giving a shit about using her powers for Dustin's entertainment.

"Okay."

Jess rolls her eyes playfully while Lucas sighed, shaking his head.

"Use your powers, okay?"

Eleven just looks at Dustin with a blank face as he drops it again.

"Idiot."

Mike sighs, walking over to pick up the spaceship.

"She's not a dog!" he defended Eleven, making Jess raise her eyebrow, smirking at him.

Mike noticed and rolled his eyes, not-so-subtly hiding the blush creeping up on his cheeks.

"Boys and young lady! Time for school!"

Jess puts her rifle in her backpack, before walking to Eleven, smiling at her.

"Just stay down here. Don't make any noise, and don't leave." Mike tells her, Jess nodding along.

"If you get hungry, eat Dustin's snacks, okay?" Jess tells her, Eleven

looking at the two of them.

"Michael! Jessica!"

"COMING!" they both yelled, irritated they got interrupted.

"You know those power lines?" Mike asked, his voice soft again.

"Power lines?"

"Yeah. The ones behind the house?" Jess asks her, causing Eleven to nod.

"Yes."

"Meet us there, after school."

"After school?"

"Yeah, 3:15," Jess says, smiling at her.

Eleven looked confused.

"Ah," Mike says, taking off his watch, and placing it on Eleven's wrist.

"When the number read three-one-five, meet us there," Mike tells her, Jess nodding.

"Three-one-five," Eleven says, looking at the watch.

"Three-one-five." Mike and Jess repeat, looking at each other before bursting out into laughter.

Eleven watches them and smiles.

"¡Adios, Once!" Jess says, grabbing her backpack and running up the stairs with Mike.

Eleven watched them both, the smile still there.

"Adios, Jessie...Mike."

X

The boys and Jess were looking around for rocks, Dustin's hat still on her head.

"How about this one?" Mike asked Dustin, causing Jess to turn to look at him.

"Too big for the sling."

Jess walks up to Dustin, looking around for more rocks.

"So, do you think Eleven was born with her powers, like the X-Men, or do you think she acquired them, like...like Green Lantern?" Dustin asked, causing Jess to furrow her eyebrows.

"That's a pretty good question, Dustin. Let's ask her when we get back," she suggested, Dustin nodding.

"She's not a superhero. She's a weirdo." Lucas says, causing Jess to glare at him.

"Why does that matter? The X-Men are weirdos." Mike defended her before Jess could say something.

"If you love her so much, why don't you marry her?" Lucas asked, causing Jess to snort.

"Come on Lucas leave him alone..."

"Thank you, Jess."

"He can't help who he falls in love with!" she finishes, causing Mike to glare at her.

"What are you talking about?"

"Mike, seriously?"

"What?" Mike asked, completely oblivious.

"Oh my god he's so oblivious I can't." Jess giggled under her breath.

"You look at her all, like..."

Lucas looked down then back up, imitating Mike's face when he looks at Eleven, making Jess shriek in laughter when he starts talking.

"Hi, El! El! El! El! I love you so much!" Lucas mocks Mike, hugging him mockingly, making Dustin and Jess explode with laughter.

"Would you marry me?"

"Shut up, Lucas."

Lucas was about to continue mocking Mike when;

"Yeah, shut up, Lucas."

The laughing stops as they turned to see Troy and his minion walking up to them.

Jess stood in front of the boys, glaring at Troy.

"What are you losers doing back here?"

"Probably looking for their missing friend."

"Fuck you!" Jess hissed, glaring at Troy's minion.

"Yeah, that's not funny. It's serious. He's in danger." Dustin says, pushing Jess behind him, making a faint blush appear on her cheeks.

"I hate to break it to you, Toothless, but he's not in danger. He's dead. That's what my dad says. He said he was probably killed by some other queer." Troy says, laughing.

"Your homophobic dad doesn't know shit!" Jess yelled, growling, pushing Dustin aside, rolling up her sleeves before being held back by Mike, giving her a look, making her sigh and calm down.

"Come on. Just ignore him."

They both walk past before Jess gets slugged in the face by Troy's minion and Mike gets tripped by Troy, his chin hitting a rock, both of them groaning in pain.

"Jess!" Dustin exclaims, rushing over to her, a huge bruise appearing on her face.

"Watch what you say Bookworm and where you're going, Frogface."

"I'm fine Dustin, let's help Mike up," she muttered, wincing as Dustin tenderly took her face, looking at the bruise.

They both helped Lucas help Mike up.

"You alright?"

"Yeah."

Mike turns to Jess, his eyes widening at the bruise.

"Holy shit Jess, are you alright?" Mike asked, reaching out to her face.

"Woah, man. Bad move. It's going to hurt her a lot more if you touch it." Dustin says, hitting Mike's arm down.

Mike and Lucas shared a look, smirking at Jess who blushed, smiling sheepishly.

Dustin sighs before looking down and getting a rock, Lucas glaring at where Troy and his minion had gone.

"Hey. How about this one?"

Mike grinned, nodding.

"Yeah," he says, chuckling.

"Yeah?"

"Yeah, this is it," Mike says, handing it to Lucas, who had his arm playfully around Jess' shoulders.

"Oh, yeah," Lucas says, holding it up, Jess grinning at it.

"Oh hell yeah! That's the monster killer right there!" Jess exclaimed, Mike, laughing.

"Whoo!"

Jess giggled, throwing her arms around the three boys, grinning.

"My boys." she teased.

"Our girl." Dustin teased back, causing them to laugh.

Jess giggled, pulling their heads closer to hers.

10. Chapter 10

Summary for the Chapter:

Eleven leads them back to Will's house, only for them to realize a few minutes later he's dead and Eleven lied...but did she?

Eleven walked up the hill, towards the power lines Mike and Jess had talked about, her hands shaking a bit.

She looked around, anxious that she might be seen and looked down at Mike's watch.

"Three-one-five. Three-one-five. Three-one-five."

She paced around, looking at the watch when she heard a meow.

She looked to see a cat, her eyes widening, breathing heavily.

She furrowed her eyebrows, her lips trembling as her mind flashed back to when she had failed to complete an experiment where she had to hurt a cat.

She was supposed to be punished for it, but she killed one of the bad men that was locking her in that room that she absolutely hated.

Apparently what she did pleased her 'Papa' and she wasn't forced to

be in the room.

"El!"

"Once!"

She turned to see Mike, Jess, Dustin, and Lucas coming up with their bikes.

Her eyes widened at the sight of Jess' face.

Jess noticed and smiled sheepishly.

"You okay?" Mike asked, walking closer to her with his bike.

She nodded, reassuring Mike.

Mike tapped on his seat, looking at her.

"Hop on. We only have a few hours."

She walked towards Mike, getting on his bike, Mike getting on as well.

She held onto his jacket, holding on tightly as they rode off, Jess and Mike going at the same speed, going behind Lucas and Dustin.

X

The five kids were walking through the woods, Mike, Jess, and Eleven ahead of Dustin and Lucas.

Eleven looked at Mike, and then to Jess.

"Why did they hurt you two?"

Mike looked at Eleven, surprised by her question.

"What?"

Eleven pointed at his chin and at Jess' bruised cheek.

"Oh, that. Uh...I just fell at recess and Jess ran into a pole."

Jess frowned, shaking her head at Eleven.

"Mike..."

"Yeah?"

"Friends tell the truth."

Mike hesitated before sighing.

"I was tripped by this mouthbreather Troy, and Jess was punched in the face by his mouthbreather minion, okay?"

"Mouthbreather?"

"Yeah, you know...a dumb person. A knucklehead." Jess explained, looking at her.

"Knucklehead?"

"I don't know why I just didn't tell you. Everyone at school knows. I just didn't want you to think I was such a wastoid, you know?"

"And...I didn't want you to think I was weak...I don't really like being defined that term." Jess mumbles, looking down.

"Mike...Jessie..."

"Yeah?" they say, looking at her.

"I understand," she says, looking at the both of them.

"Oh," Mike says, Jess smiling.

"Okay, cool," Jess says.

"Yeah, cool." Mike agrees.

"Cool," Eleven says, smiling, making Jess giggle, and Mike looking at Eleven adoringly, smiling at her.

They continued walking.

X

"Let's take a break, I can't feel my legs anymore," Dustin called, the three looking back to see him panting, his hands on his knees.

"Fine...but for 5 minutes only. We can't waste time." Mike sighed, Jess

nodding in agreement.

She turned to Eleven, who looked at her.

She makes a funny face, making Eleven confused.

"What are you doing?"

"Trying to make you laugh by making funny faces."

She makes another, getting a giggle from Eleven.

Eleven then imitates the face Jess made and got a laugh from the latina.

They both went on and on with the faces, their laughter filling the woods.

The boys watched from a distance, Mike smiling at the sight of two girls getting along. Dustin was chuckling under his breath at the faces they were making, and Lucas, he shook his head, not-so-subtly hiding his amused grin.

Jess covered her mouth, placing her hand on Eleven's shoulder, who also was laughing hysterically, her eyes closed tight, her hands raised

to cover her mouth as well, but not able to.

If anyone watched from a distance, some might say they were really close friends.

Fewer might even say they were sisters, by the way they held onto each other.

In a way, they were both.

X

It was now dark, the bikes' headlights on as they walked on to through the woods, Jess, Mike and Eleven still ahead.

Eleven walked quickly up ahead, eager to show where Will was hiding.

Or at least, in the other dimension where she found him.

She marched up to a house and turned to Mike and Jess.

"Here."

"Yeah, this is where Will lives," Mike says, Jess nodding.

Eleven looked at them, wanting them to understand.

"Hiding."

Jess furrowed her eyebrows in confusion.

"No, no, this is where he lives," Mike says, looking at her.

"He's missing from here Eleven. Understand?" Jess asked.

"What are we doing here?" Lucas asked.

"She said he's hiding here," Mike tells him.

"Um...no!"

"I swear, if we walked all the way out here for nothing-" Dustin exclaimed.

"That's exactly what we did! I told you two she didn't know what the hell she was talking about!" Lucas exclaimed.

Mike turns to her, his expression serious.

"Why did you bring us here?"

Eleven stammered, looking to Jess for help.

"Mike, don't waste your time with her."

"What do you want to do then?"

"Call the cops, like we should have done yesterday."

"We are NOT calling the cops!" Jess snapped at Lucas, her exhaustion making her cranky.

"Hey, guys?" Dustin called.

"What other choice do we have?"

"Guys!" Dustin yells.

Sirens were being heard, Jess' eyes widening as police cars and an ambulance drove by.

"Will..." she and Mike says.

Jess was the first to hop on her bike, this time not waiting for Mike and Eleven.

She just rode in the direction the ambulance went, panting madly, tears threatening to pour as she leads the group by how fast she rode, her adrenaline kicking in.

"Por favor...no dejes que Will esté muerto...por favor...(Please...don't let Will be dead...please...)" she cried, riding faster and faster.

They ended up in the quarry, Jess hopping out of her bike, hiding behind the ambulance truck.

She felt someone grab her hand and she already knew it was Dustin, though she didn't care, as she, the boys, and Eleven watched in horror as they pulled a boy's body from the water.

"Eso no puede ser Will...eso no puede ser...(That can't be Will...that can't be...)" Jess gasped, tears running down.

"It's not Will. It can't be." Mike says, Jess shaking her head in denial.

They pulled the boat out of the water, Jess crying out as she recognized the clothing that Will was wearing the day he disappeared.

"It's Will. It's really Will." Lucas says.

"No..." Jess whimpers.

Dustin hugged her, rubbing her back as she cried.

She turned, to comfort Mike, when Eleven walked over to him, trying to talk to him.

"Mike..." she whispered, reaching out to him.

He hits her arm down, glaring at her.

"Mike!" Jess gasped, walking over to Eleven and pushing her behind her.

She was upset at Eleven as well but, there was no need to hit her arm like that.

"Mike'? 'Mike', what? You were supposed to help us find him alive. You said he was alive! Why did you lie to us?! What's wrong with you?! What is wrong with you?!" Mike exclaimed, his eyes watering.

Eleven gasped, tears threatening to spill.

"Mike..."

"What?"

Eleven flinched, not daring to grab onto Jess' arm for comfort, afraid she'll do what Mike had done.

Mike raised his eyebrows at Eleven before turning away.

"Mike, come on. Don't do this, man. Mike..." Lucas says, his voice cracking while tears ran down his cheeks.

"Mike, where are you going? Mike!" Dustin calls, his voice also cracked, tears running down his cheeks.

"Mike, por favor, ¡volver! (Mike, please, come back!)" Jess begged, tears still running down her cheeks.

They watched as he grabbed his bike, getting on and riding away.

Jess sobs, grabbing the boys and hugging them both, all of them sobbing out for the loss of their best friend.

Eleven watched, tears running down, not knowing what to say.

She knew Will was alive, just in a different dimension.

But the evidence for Will being dead, no matter if it was fake, was too overwhelming.

Jess pulled from their embraces, kissing both boys on the foreheads, all of them taking shaky breaths.

"Come on Eleven, let's go home."

Jess got on her bike, looking to Eleven with a betrayed glance.

Eleven hopped on, hesitating before wrapping her arms around her waist.

Jess rode off, not saying anything on the way to the Wheelers.

"Go down to the basement door, Mike and I will go down there in a bit...we just need some time."

Eleven nodded, getting off the bike.

Jess hesitated before calling out to her.

"Eleven?"

Eleven turned, scared of what she might say.

"Just so you know...I'm disappointed and angry at you...but I don't hate you. That's all."

Eleven nods, looking away, feeling guilty as a small smile of relief appeared in her mouth as she walked to the basement door, opening it and closing it.

She hesitated before walking up the stairs, creaking open the door a bit to see that Jess had walked in and...Eleven started to cry when she saw her face.

Jess had walked towards Mike, her lips trembling as he released from his mom's hug and they both grabbed onto each other, letting out more sobs as they clutched the back of their shirts and bits of their

hair, crumbling down to their knees.

Eleven closed the door, wiping her tears and sighing heavily.

She wouldn't let them grieve a death that hasn't happened.

That WON'T happen.

Not on her watch.

11. Chapter 11

Summary for the Chapter:

Eleven gets a makeover, learns what a 'hug' means, and gets to go to school with Jess and the boys.

Mike was looking through some of the drawings Will had made and left at his place while Jess was curled in a ball on the floor, the Star Wars hoodie Will gave for her 12th birthday on.

Eleven was toying with Mike's Supercomm again, this time changing the channel every second.

"Can you please stop that?" Mike asked, irritated.

Eleven looked up, stopping for a second before going back to playing with it.

"Are you deaf?!" Mike asked, his anger showing.

"Michael Wheeler..." Jess warned, looking at the freckled boy.

"No Jessica Hernandez! She needs to listen what I have to say!"

Jess sighed, frowning.

"I thought we were friends, you know? But friends tell each other the truth. And they definitely don't lie to each other. You made us think Will was okay, that he was still out there, but he wasn't. He wasn't!"

Eleven opened her mouth to say something, but closed it, thinking against that idea.

"Maybe you thought you were helping, but you weren't. You hurt me, AND Jess. Do you understand? No offense to Jess' first language, but you made her speak only in Spanish for three HOURS. That's how sad she was. What you did sucks."

Eleven looked at the latina on the floor, playing with the hoodie strings.

"Lucas was right about you. All along."

"Mike! That was too far and you know it!" Jess growled, her forehead bangs sticking to her face from the dried tears on her cheeks.

Eleven continued to play with the Supercomm, using her powers when she found the station she wanted.

Jess' eyes widened when she heard Will singing through the Supercomm, Mike looking up to Eleven in disbelief.

Jess turned to Eleven, seeing the blood running down her nose as

Will continued to sing 'Should I Stay Or Should I Go'.

Jess and Mike rushed to Eleven, who handed the Supercomm to Mike.

He hesitated before grabbing it, Jess gasping, looking at Eleven with watery eyes.

"Will, is that you? It's Mike! Do you copy? Over?"

No reply and Will was no longer singing.

"Will are you there? Will?"

No reply.

Mike looked at Eleven, any anger he had towards her disappearing in an instant.

"Was that...was it..."

Eleven smiles softly at the two.

"Will."

Jess cried out in joy and relief, jumping on Eleven, wrapping her arms around her tightly.

"¡Gracias, gracias!" she cried, burying her head in Eleven's shoulder.

Eleven freezes, not knowing what to do.

Then Mike joins the hug, wrapping his arms around the two, he and Jess crying out their thank yous in English (Mike) and Spanish (Jess).

Eleven hesitantly wrapped her arms around the two, smiling and breathing out shakily.

She had successfully stopped them from mourning a death that never happened.

X

"Michael? Jessica?"

Mrs. Wheeler opened the door to see Mike and Jess sharing the bed, Jess fast asleep, hugging Mike, tears still running down her cheeks, and taking heavy breaths while Mike was stroking her hair in a

comfortingly-brotherly way.

She was really selling this, 'My best friend is dead and I'm depressed about it' act.

Even though, it wasn't really something to be proud of and laugh about.

"Hi, honey. How are you and Jess feeling?"

"I...uh...I don't think we can go to school today. Jess was still speaking in fluent Spanish before we went to bed and she had a night terror in the middle of the night so, she crawled into bed without me knowing. She's still shaken up a bit."

"Oh, that's fine, sweetie. I need to drop off Nance, then I'm gonna check in with Barb's parents. Why don't you grab a book or something and come with me? We can stop by the video store on the way back, pick out whatever you want. Even R-rated."

"What about Jess?" Mike asked, the girl still crying.

"Jess really looks like she needs her sleep and we don't want to wake her up if we aren't going to understand what she's saying if she's still speaking in fluent Spanish."

Mike REALLY wanted to roll his eyes when she said that but

refrained himself from doing so.

"I think I just want to stay home today, be with Jess. I can understand some of the things she says thanks to Spanish class so I think I'll be good if she's still speaking fluent Spanish when she wakes up. I mean...if that's okay?"

"Well, are you sure you're gonna be all right with Jess all by yourself?"

"I think so, we've been friends for 5 years now. I think I can handle being with my best friend for a bit when she needs me."

Mrs. Wheeler sighed.

"Okay. But if you need anything, call Dad at work."

"Okay."

"Okay."

Mrs. Wheeler pecked Mike's forehead, leaving the room.

"Bye."

"Bye, sweetie."

She closed the door.

Jess let out a stream of giggles, Mike giggling along with her.

"I can't believe she fell for that crap," she says, getting up, grinning at Mike.

"I know, it was really hilarious." Mike chuckled, getting his Supercomm.

He pulled the antenna up, getting on Lucas' channel.

"Lucas, do you copy?"

No answer.

"Lucas, come on, I know you're there!"

No answer.

"This is urgent. I'm serious."

Still no answer.

"I'm not going to stop until you answer."

And...no answer.

"Lucas. Lucas!"

Still no answer.

"Lucas, Lucas, Lucas, Lucas, Lucas, Lucas, Lucas, Lucas, Lucas, Lucas, Lucas..."

"Go away, Mike. I'm not in the mood, all right? Over and out."

"No, not 'out'." (Jess)

"Jess?"

"We're not messing around, okay? This is about Will. Over." she says, frowning.

"What about Will? You mean about his funeral? Over."

"What the- no not his funeral. Fuck his funeral!" Jess exclaimed in anger.

"What?!"

"Just get over here stat. And bring Dustin. Over and out."

X

They all were sitting around Eleven, Jess sitting next to Eleven as she used her powers to channel Will through the Supercomm, Will's whimpering being heard.

"We keep losing the signal, but you heard it, right?" Mike asked Dustin and Lucas.

"Yeah, I heard a baby," Lucas says.

"What?" Mike and Jess ask, them looking at each other and rolling their eyes.

"Mike, Jess, you obviously tapped into a baby monitor. It's probably the Blackburns' next door."

"Uh, did that sound like a baby to you?" Mike asked, not believing what Lucas was saying.

"That was Will!" Jess exclaimed.

Lucas sighed.

"Mike, Jess..."

"Lucas you don't understand. He spoke last night. Words!" Mike exclaimed, Jess nodding.

"I heard it too."

"He was singing that weird song he and Jess loves. Even El heard him!"

"Oh, well, if the weirdo heard him, then I guess-"

"Are you sure you're on the right channel?" Dustin asked, Jess sighing in relief that Dustin believed them, smiling gratefully at him.

"I don't think it's about that," Mike says.

"Yeah. I think, somehow, she's channeling him." Jess agrees, looking at Eleven.

Lucas gave her a weird look.

"Like...like Professor X," Dustin suggested, Mike and Jess grinning and nodding.

"Yeah."

"Are you actually believing this crap?" Lucas exclaimed, causing Jess to glare at him.

"I don't know, I mean...do you remember when Will fell off his bike and broke his finger? He sounded a lot like that."

Jess smiled at Dustin, grateful he was considering the very possibility that Will was alive, even if there was still heavy evidence that he was dead.

"Did you guys not see what I saw? They pulled Will's body out of the water. He's dead!"

Jess wrapped her arms around her legs, looking down.

"Well, maybe it's his ghost. Maybe he's haunting us."

"It's not his ghost," Mike says.

"So, how do you know that?" Lucas asked.

"I just do!"

"Then, what was in that water?"

"I don't know! All I know is Will is alive. Will is alive! He's out there somewhere. All we have to do is find him."

Lucas and Dustin looked at Jess, who had bitten her lip, pulling down the sleeves of her Star Wars hoodie.

"He better be alive, or we're going to have to deal with a really upset Jess, and remember the last time she was really upset?" Lucas whispered to Mike and Dustin.

"We know Lucas. And that's why we don't TALK about it." Dustin

whispers angrily, mad at Lucas for bringing that up.

They turned their heads when they heard static, Eleven still trying to contact Will.

"This isn't gonna work. We need to get El to a stronger radio."

"Mr. Clarke's Heathkit ham shack," Dustin says, Jess looking up towards the boys.

"At school? But, he never lets us take it anywhere," she says, stating the problem.

"Yeah, the Heathkit's at school. There is no way we're gonna get the weirdo in there without anyone noticing. I mean...look at her."

They turned their heads to Eleven.

As much as Jess and Mike thought she looked beautiful on her own, there was no denying what the other kids might think.

As much as they hated the idea, they knew Lucas was right.

Eleven needed a makeover.

X

Eleven was sitting across from Mike, Jess who had gotten Nancy's makeup kit, gave it to Mike and he opened it.

He grabbed the blush brush and the blush, opening it and patting it on it.

Eleven leaned in and he leaned in as well, following Jess' instructions on how to put it on, Jess trying not to laugh at Eleven's reaction to it touching her skin.

Jess also told him how to put on the pink chapstick, making sure to tell him to put it on softly on her lips, so he doesn't accidentally hurt her.

Mike looks at her after he's done, nodding and saying 'yeah.'

Then it was Jess' turn to help her with the dress and wig Lucas and Dustin picked out for her.

"Okay, the boys have a good sense of style, though, I'm more of a tomboyish kind of gal."

"Tomboyish?"

"Yeah, you know? You dress and act like a boy, but you're not."

Eleven nods as Jess helps her put the dress on.

"But hey! Sometimes I go for the girly look! Not all the time though, I like my overalls and flannel outfits."

Eleven smiles, Jess putting on the wig on Eleven's head, fixing it up a bit.

She steps back and her eyes widened.

"Wow...you look amazing."

Eleven smiles bashfully.

"Thank you, Jessie."

"God I wanna give you a hug!"

"Hug?"

"Yeah, what I did when we first heard Will through the Supercomm. It's to wrap your arms around someone and squeeze them to show affection. You can either squeeze lightly or you could squeeze tightly. Hugs also depend on the type of person you're hugging. I can't really explain it, but, you have to pay attention to the way people hug you. Some people's hugs are good, some are not. They have to include three major things; the feeling of being safe, the feeling of being loved, and the feeling of being cared for."

Eleven looked confused.

"Maybe one day in the future you'll understand it. Now come on! Let's go show the boys!"

X

Jess opened the door, smiling at the boys before moving aside, revealing Eleven, who walked up, looking towards Jess and then back at the boys.

Mike looked star struck.

"Wow, she looks-"

"Pretty." Mike interrupts Dustin.

Jess giggled while Eleven smiled.

Mike catching on what he said, adds; "Good. You look pretty good."

Jess continues to giggle, looking at Dustin who was also grinning at him, their eyes meeting momentarily as Eleven walked to the mirror, Mike following behind her.

Jess winks at Dustin, walking towards Mike, smiling at Eleven's reaction to how she looked like.

"Pretty," she whispers.

"...good."

Jess smiled, nodding.

"Yup, you look pretty good Once."

X

The five kids were riding to school, well, at least, Jess and the boys were.

Eleven was holding onto Mike as he rode his bike, looking around the

town for the first time, sinking it all in.

She looked to Jess and they both shared a grin, Jess sticking out her tongue and Eleven laughing.

X

They pushed the doors open, Mike looking towards all of them.

"Ok, remember, if anyone sees us, look sad."

Jess nodding, entering her mind to where she was sad and scared while the boys mimed crying to Eleven, explaining to her what 'sad' meant.

"Attention students, there will be an assembly to honor Will Byers in the gymnasium now. Do not go to fourth period."

They went to the door where AV Club took place, trying to open it.

"It's locked." Mike sighed.

"What?"

"Hey, do you think you can open it? With your powers?" Dustin asked Eleven, her opening her mouth to reply when;

"Boys? Young lady?"

Lucas slammed his back against the door, everyone freezing.

"Hey," Lucas said.

Jess looked down, playing with her sleeves, her eyes watering.

"Assembly's about to start."

"We know. We're just, you know..." Mike mumbled, trailing off, looking to Jess when she sniffed, tears starting to run down.

"Upset," Lucas says, not so convincingly.

"Y-Yeah, definitely upset."

We needed some alone time." Mike says, walking to Jess, rubbing her arm, comfortingly.

"To cry," Dustin adds, looking to Jess, his eyes widening as tears run down her cheeks.

"Lo extraño...(I miss him...)" she whimpers, her voice cracking, looking at Mr. Clarke sadly.

One thought ran through the boys head;

'She's good!'

"Yeah, listen...I get it. I do. I know how hard this is, but let's just be there for Will, huh?"

The boys and Jess nod, the three of them walking towards her to 'comfort' her.

She laid her head on Dustin's shoulders, closing her eyes as she took shaky breaths.

"Si, Señor Clarke..." she mumbled, sniffing.

"And then..."

Mr. Clarke grabbed the keys to the room, tossing it to Mike.

"The Heathkit is all yours for the rest of the day. What do you say?"

The boys and Jess smile at each other.

"I-I don't believe we met. What's your name?" Mr. Clarke says, looking to Eleven.

Jess walked to Eleven, smiling at her reassuringly.

"Eleven-"

"Eleanor! She's my, uh-"

"Cousin."

"Second cousin."

Mike sighs.

"She's here for Will's funeral."

"Ah, well, welcome to Hawkins Middle, Eleanor. I wish you were here under better circumstances."

She looked to Jess and grabbed her hand before replying.

"Thank you."

"Uh, where are you from exactly?"

The boys looked at Eleven, Jess as well, not knowing exactly either and was scared of what she might say.

"Bad place-"

"Sweden!"

"I have a lot of Swedish family." Mike says, looking to Jess, that screamed 'help!'.

"She hates it there." Dustin continued.

"Frío (Cold.)" Jess says, her voice sounding tired.

Eleven looked at her, shocked at her ability to look and act so depressed.

And, not to mention, she was talking in the foreign language that was called Spanish fluently, Eleven wanting to understand what on earth she was saying.

"Sub-zero," Dustin says.

"Shall we?"

"Yep!"

X

"At times like these, it is important that we come together as a community."

Dustin swings the doors open, Jess flinching as the doors hit the walls.

"We come-"

All eyes landed on the five kids.

"Abort," Dustin whispered.

He turned back, only to be stopped by Lucas, pushing him back and forward.

Jess walked towards him and grabbed his hand.

He looked at her, still in her zone, wiping tears from her eyes.

He knew what she was thinking that was making her cry and act all depressed like this.

"Hey," he whispered, causing her to look at him.

"It's going to be okay. That happened a long time ago and it won't happen again, okay? And if it ever does, I'll stand with you."

She smiled at him, hesitating before pecking his cheek.

"Thanks, Dustin."

X

"Will Byers' death is an unimaginable tragedy. Will was an exceptional student and a wonderful friend to all of us. It's impossible to express the hole his loss will leave in our community. I'd like to introduce you to Sandy Sloane, she's a local grief counselor from the church over in Jonesboro."

Jess was sitting between Eleven and Dustin, her zone disappearing slowly, causing her to just play with the sleeves of her flannel shirt.

She was disgusted on how many fakers there were in the school.

She and Dustin shared a glance and smiled at each other, Jess blushing a soft pink.

"Look at these fakers," Mike said, causing her to turn to him.

"They probably didn't even know his name till today." Lucas agreed.

They heard snickering, all of them looking up to see Troy and his minion, James scoffing.

"Who is interested in this? This is so stupid."

Jess formed her fists, her face turning red.

"Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah..."

Eleven looked to see Jess' face had turned red, her fists tightening.

She placed her hand on top of her right fist, causing Jess to relax it slightly.

"Oh, he was such a great student. Oh, he's going to leave a hole in the community." Troy mocks, James snickering.

"Mouthbreather." Eleven states, Jess nodding as Mike looks at her.

The mocking continues but, Jess tries to ignore it as she intertwined her fingers with Eleven's hand, Eleven doing the same with her and Mike, who also intertwines his fingers with her's.

X

The school bell rings, the three of them, still holding hands walked down the steps, Lucas and Dustin following behind them.

But, Jess and Mike weren't going to let what they saw and heard go past them and Eleven noticed as they both let go of her hands, looking worriedly at the two.

"Hey! Hey! Hey, Troy! Hey, Troy!" Mike called, causing the bully and his minion to turn to the two, Jess glaring at them.

"You...You think this is funny?"

"¿De verdad crees que esto es hilarante? (You really think this is hilarious?)" Jess exclaimed, baring her teeth.

"What'd you say, Wheeler? And Hernandez, quit speaking Mexican for a second, I can't understand you." Troy sneered.

Mike grabbed Jess' hand, looking at her to calm down before she could punch Troy, and then looked back at him.

"W-We saw you guys laughing over there. And I think that's a real messed up thing to do." Mike stammered, Jess glaring at them.

"Didn't you two listen to the counselor, Wheeler? Hernandez? Grief shows itself in funny ways." James said, Jess exhaling angrily through her nose.

"Besides, what's there to be sad about, anyway? Will's in fairyland now, right? Flying around with all the other little fairies. All happy and gay."

Troy imitated a fairy, Jess' jaw squaring.

All she wanted to do was to punch Troy's face in.

Eleven looked at Mike and Jess, giving them a look to 'go get him!'

And they did.

Mike and Jess, letting go of their hands walked over to Troy, Jess tapping on his shoulder and punching him, Mike pushing him down.

Jess panted, grabbing Mike's hand again, both of them squeezing tightly in a brotherly-sisterly-friendship way.

"You're dead Wheeler, Hernandez! Dead!" Troy yelled, getting up and running to attack them.

He suddenly stopped, causing Jess to furrow her eyebrows in confusion, looking to Dustin and Lucas who were reacting the same way.

She looked at Mike, who glanced at her too, both of them sharing confused glances.

Mike and Jess looked down when they heard a tinkling noise and

Jess snorting when she saw something she least expected; Troy peeing his pants.

"Dude, Troy peed himself!" a boy exclaimed, causing the crowd of kids to laugh.

Jess burst out laughing, looking at Dustin and Lucas who was laughing as well.

Mike just stared, confused and astounded at how it must have happened when Jess nudged him, looking towards Eleven who smiled at the two, a dot of blood barely leaving her nose.

She wipes it off, turning to leave, grinning at Jess' wink as Mike looked back to Jess, both of them laughing together.

"Mike, Jess! Let's go!" Lucas calls to them, Mike still grinning widely at Jess who just winks at him, agreeing with what he was thinking in his head;

'Eleven's such a badass!'

X

Mike locked the door while Jess turned on the light.

"Come on."

They all walked to the Heathkit, Eleven sitting down with Mike on her right while Jess was on her left.

"Now what?" Dustin asks.

"She'll find him. Right, El?" Mike asked her.

She doesn't say anything as Mike turns it on.

"Hey," Jess says, placing her hand on Eleven's shoulder, causing her to look at her.

"You can do this. I believe in you."

Eleven smiled, nodding before turning her attention to the Heathkit, closing her eyes, concentrating.

X

"She's doing it," Mike says, looking at Eleven, Jess' hand still on her shoulder as she looked at her.

"She's finding him," Jess says, smiling.

"This is crazy," Dustin says, grinning.

"Calm down. She just closed her eyes." Lucas says, Jess rolling her eyes.

The light suddenly snaps off, all of them gasping.

"Holy..." Dustin says.

"...shit," Jess whispered.

They heard clanging, causing Jess to flinch, looking at the Heathkit.

The clanging intensifies, Dustin getting leaning close to the Heathkit, leaning in closer to Jess.

"What is that?" he asked, Jess shaking her head.

"No sé...(I don't know...)" she mumbles.

The clanging continues, Jess gulping.

"Mom?"

Jess gasped, her eyes widening.

"No way!" Lucas says.

"Will!" Jess exclaimed.

"Mom...please..."

Jess looked to Dustin, fear in her eyes.

He replicated her expression when he looked at her.

"Mom! Mom!"

"Will!"

"Will, it's us! Are you there?"

"Will, ¡por favor! ¡Respuesta! (Will, please! Answer!)" Jess cried.

"Can you hear us?"

"We're here!"

"Hello? Mom?"

"Why can't he hear us?"

"I don't know!"

"Mom? Mom! Mom...Mom, it's coming!"

Jess let in a sharp breath, tears threatening to fall again.

"It's like home, but it's so dark...It's so dark and empty! And it's cold!
Mom? Mom!"

Jess let out a sob, covering her mouth, Dustin looking towards her and wrapping his arm around her, his bottom lip trembling.

"Mom, please!"

The fuse blows, causing the boys and Jess to yelp, Eleven opening her eyes, exhausted.

Jess turned to Eleven, hugging her tightly.

She felt so weak.

Mike grabbed Eleven's shoulder.

"El, are you okay?"

"Once, ¿estás bien? (Eleven, are you okay?)" Jess asked, wiping her tears, looking at Eleven.

Eleven didn't answer, she just stared helplessly at Mike.

"Can you move?"

Eleven didn't answer, she just stared helplessly at him.

He furrowed his eyebrows together, looking at her act so weak.

Lucas had come towards them, probably to tell them they had to go.

Jess looked at Mike, frowning.

"Here, help her up."

The three of them got her up, Dusting grabbing her feet, Jess' arms under Eleven's armpits, pulling her up, hating how Eleven felt like a rag doll.

They put her on a cart, all four of them pushing it out of the school.

"This way!" Mike exclaimed.

Jess and Mike shared a look, a knowing look.

Eleven CAN get weak from using too much of her power, and whenever that may happen in the future, they'll be there to help her up until she was strong enough to stand on her own.

And even when she becomes stronger again, they'll be standing by her till the end.

12. Chapter 12

Summary for the Chapter:

Dustin and the boys comfort Jess while at Will's 'funeral', knowing that funerals give her horrible memories.

They were back at Mike's house, Eleven laying her head on Jess' lap on the couch, still exhausted from using too much of her powers.

"What was Will saying?" Mike asked, Jess, looking across the couch to where he was sitting.

"Like home...like home...but dark?"

"And empty," Lucas added, sighing.

"Empty and cold. Wait did he say cold?" Dustin asked, Jess shrugging.

"I don't know. The stupid radio kept going in and out."

"It's like riddles in the dark," Dustin says, looking up.

"Like home. Like his house?" Mike asked.

"Or maybe like Hawkins," Lucas suggested.

"Upside down," Eleven says causing Jess to look at her.

"What'd she say?" Lucas asked.

"Upside down," Jess mumbled, realizing what she meant, looking at the flipped over Dragons and Dungeons board, Mike following her eyes and nodding.

"What?" Lucas asked.

"Upside down."

He walked to the board, sitting down.

"When El showed us where Will was, she flipped the board over, remember? Upside down. Dark. Empty."

"Do you understand what he's talking about?" Lucas asked.

"No," Dustin replies.

"How can you two not?" Jess asked, causing him to look over towards her and shoots her a glare.

"Guys, come on, think about it. When El took us to find Will, she took us to his house, right?"

"Yeah. And he wasn't there."

"But what if he was there? What if we just couldn't see him? What if he was on the other side?"

Lucas and Dustin became quiet, Jess rolling her eyes at how slow they were.

Mike flips the board back to front.

"What if this is Hawkins and..."

He flips it to the back.

"...this is where Will is? The Upside Down."

"Like the Vale of Shadows." Jess and Dustin say, both of them making eye-contact, blushing.

X

Dustin got the folder explaining the game Dungeons and Dragons, flipping the pages until he went to the one explaining the Vale of Shadows.

"The Vale of Shadows is a dimension that is dark reflection or echo of our world. It is a place of decay and death. A place out of phase. A place of monsters...It is right next to you, and you don't even see it." Dustin says, pausing and fearfully looking at the boys and then his eyes landed on Jess, saying the last sentence as if it was a rude awakening.

"An alternate dimension," Mike whispered.

"But...how...how do we get there?" Lucas asked.

"You cast Shadow Walk," Dustin replies.

"In real life, dummy."

"We can't shadow walk, but...maybe she can," Dustin says, looking at Eleven.

They turn to Eleven, Jess looking down at Eleven.

"Do you know how we get there?" Mike asked.

"To the Upside Down?" Jess asked, biting her lip.

Eleven shook her head causing Jess to sigh, looking up.

"Oh, my god." Lucas groaned.

X

The Wheelers were all ready for the funeral for 'Will' but they were waiting up on Jess, who had been playing her depressed zone when around Mike's sister and his parents.

They heard a door open and close, looking up to see Jess.

Mike frowned, not believing he had to see Jess in a black dress TWICE in his life.

And the irony is that, it was for nothing since Will was alive.

"Oh, sweetie." Mrs. Wheeler says, taking her hand as Jess kept her gaze lowered.

She looked up to Mike, and he flinched at how 'dead' her usually bright blue eyes were.

"Mike...no estoy listo para afrontarlo (Mike...I'm not ready to face it)." she whimpers, tears starting to form.

He said nothing, instead bringing her into a hug, rubbing her back.

"I know...I'm not ready either."

X

When they arrived at the graveyard, Lucas and Dustin were already there, talking.

Lucas looked up, and he actually looked sad, hitting Dustin to turn and look.

Dustin did and he furrowed his eyebrows in worry, seeing Mike with his arm around Jess as they walked towards them.

To hear of the boys being sad to see Jess in a black dress again is something that would be unheard of to the adults but, they were.

The reason was...the last time she wore a black dress was a week after The Accident happened and it completely destroyed Jess, having to wear a black dress that stripped her of the safety of her flannels and overalls.

And the boys knew that then, and they DEFINITELY know that now.

Dustin pulled her from Mike, giving her a tight hug, knowing she definitely needed it.

She may not be 'mourning' for Will's 'death', but funerals always gave her bad memories, no matter whose they were.

When she pulled away and turned to Lucas, the boy hugged her tightly as well, also aware of the painful memories that funerals give her.

Mike and Dustin soon also joined in, hugging each other as Jess finally let the tears run, burying her face into Lucas' chest as she let out shaking sobs.

They were there to comfort Jess then, they are there to comfort her now, and will always be there to comfort her when she needs it.

X

"Fear not, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God.

I will strengthen you. Yes, I will help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. It's times like these that our faith is challenged. Now, if He is truly benevolent...could God take from us someone so young, so innocent?"

Jess had her head lowered down, tears running down as the Pastor continued, that same damn wording haunting her.

Dustin had grabbed her hand and squeezed it softly when he recognized the quote, remembering hearing it 3 years ago. He remembered seeing Jess sobbing uncontrollably, unable to wipe away her tears and he wasn't able to hold her hand and reassure her that everything will get better.

This time, he was there to assure her that he was next to her, and that he was with her.

She felt him nudge her and he nudged Lucas and motioned to Mike to look to see Jennifer Hayes was crying.

"Just wait till we tell Will that Jennifer Hayes was crying at his funeral."

Mrs. Wheeler shushed them, but Dustin grinned when he Jess nudged him and gave him a small smile, shaking her head and then leaned close to his face.

"You're an idiot Dustin," she whispered in his ear, making sure that

the adults didn't hear her speak English.

He smiled at her and she smiled back before returning back to her zone, the smile and happy mood that he put her in for 15 seconds vanished.

But, he was glad that he at least made her smile in a place that gave her horrible memories.

13. Chapter 13

Summary for the Chapter:

Dustin and Jess figure out how to get to the gate.

"Mama Byers?"

Joyce snapped out of her daze to see Jessica Hernandez looking up at her, tears running down her cheeks.

"Oh, hey sweetie. Thank you for coming," she says, smiling sadly at the 12-year-old girl.

Jess hugged Joyce, pressing her face against her jacket, sniffing.

"Lo siento para todo...(I'm sorry for everything...)" she mumbled.

Joyce sighed, hugging the girl as well rubbing her back.

"I appreciate you coming today...I know how you feel about funerals."

Jess nodded, sniffing.

"Jess!"

Jess turned to see Dustin rush towards her, grabbing her hand, motioning with his head to follow him.

"Adios Mama Byers..." she mumbles, smiling sadly at her.

X

"Will! Will, it's us! Are you there?" (Lucas)

"Will, ¡por favor! ¡Respuesta!" (Jess)

"Can you hear us? We're here!" (Dustin)

"Hello? Mom?" (Will, distorted)

"Why can't he hear us?" (Lucas)

"I don't know!" (Mike)

"Mom, it's coming!" (Will, distorted)

The man listening to the recording puts the headphones down.

"She was there. And it looks like she's found her old Social Experiment friend."

X

"Mr. Clarke?"

Mr. Clarke turned to see Mike, Dustin, Lucas, and Jess standing there, Lucas having an arm around Jess as she sniffled, tears still running down.

"Oh, hey, there. How you guys holding up?"

Mike looked down, grabbing Jess' hand while Lucas looked at Dustin who was crunching on a wafer, wanting so badly to hit him in the head for not acting better.

For crying out loud Jess was CRYING!

"We're...in...mourning," he says, Jess looking towards him and back down, sighing.

"Man, these aren't real Nilla Wafers."

Jess turned away to stifle her giggle, as Mike and Lucas looked at him incredulously but secretly grateful that he was making Jess giggle and break out of her zone every once in a while.

"We were wondering if you had time to talk?" Mike asked.

"We have some questions," Lucas added.

"Un montón de preguntas (A lot of questions)." Jess says, deciding to stop the 'mourning' for a second so she empathize how important this was without having to drop the speaking in fluent Spanish.

X

"So you know how in Cosmos, Carl Sagan talks about other dimensions? Like, beyond our world?"

"Yeah, sure. Theoretically."

"Right, theoretically," Mike says, Jess, nodding along.

"So, theoretically, how do we travel there?" Lucas asked.

"You guys have been thinking about Hugh Everett's Many-Worlds Interpretation, haven't you?"

Jess looked at Mike who shrugged at her.

"Well, basically, there are parallel universes. Just like our world, but just infinite variations of it."

He paused, looking at all of them.

"Which means there's a world out there where none of this tragic stuff ever happened."

Jess noticed how the boys looked at her, giving sad glances at her.

A world where The Accident didn't happen...

"Yeah, that's not what we're talking about," Lucas says, even though it did comfort him a bit that there was an alternate universe where the boys didn't see Jess in her depressed state for 5 months after The Accident.

"Oh."

"We were thinking of more of an evil dimension, like the Vale of

Shadows," Dustin explains, Jess nodding.

"You know the Vale of Shadows?"

"An echo of the Material Plane, where necrotic and shadow magic-

"Si, exactamente (Yeah, exactly)," Jess says, nodding.

"If that did exist, a place like the Vale of Shadows, how would we travel there?"

"Theoretically."

"Well..."

Mr. Clarke paused, taking a paper plate and a pen.

"Picture...an acrobat...standing on a tightrope. Now the tightrope is our dimension. And our dimension has rules. You can move forwards, or backwards."

Mike glanced at Jess who was watching carefully, paying attention and he did the same, making sure to pay close attention.

"But, what if...right next to our acrobat, there is a flea? Now the flea can also travel back and forth, just like the acrobat. Right?"

"Right," Mike says, Lucas, Dustin and Jess nodding.

"Here's where things get really interesting. The flea can also travel this way...along the side of the rope. He can even go...underneath the rope."

"Upside down." They all say, Dustin, looking at Jess when he realized that she didn't say it in Spanish.

"Exactly."

"Pero no somos la pulga, somos el acróbata (But we're not the flea, we're the acrobat)," Jess says.

Mr. Clarke looked at the boys for translation, making Jess blush in embarrassment.

"Translation; 'But we're not the flea, we're the acrobat.'" Mike clarified for Mr. Clarke.

"In this metaphor, yes, we're the acrobat."

"So we can't go upside down?" Lucas asked.

"No."

"Well, is there any way for the acrobat to get to the Upside Down?"
Dustin asked, Jess nodding.

"Well...you'd have to create a massive amount of energy. More than humans are currently capable of creating, mind you, to open that kind of tear in time and space, and then..."

He folds the paper plate, poking a hole through it, causing Jess to flinch at the sudden noise.

"You create a doorway."

"Like a gate?" Dustin asked.

"Sure. Like a gate."

"But again, this is all-"

"Theoretical," Lucas says, nodding.

"But...but what i-if this g-gate already e-existed?" Jess stammers, Dustin widening his eyes to see Jess trying to speak English in her depressed zone.

He wasn't the only one in shock, Mike grabbed her hand and squeezed it, Lucas giving her a small smile.

"Well, if it did, I...I think we'd know. It would disrupt gravity, the magnetic field, our environment. Heck, it might even swallow us up whole."

Jess widened her eyes, looking at Mike.

"Science is neat. But I'm afraid it's not very forgiving."

X

Mike poked a hole through the piece of paper, Eleven widening her eyes at the sound.

"It would take a lot of energy to build a gate like this. But that's got to be what happened. Otherwise, how'd Will get there, right?"

"Right."

The door to the bathroom opened, Dustin looking up from his pacing to smile when he saw Jess back in her overalls, pulling her hair back to a ponytail.

"Hey, glad to see you're back to yourself."

Jess smiled, sighing.

"Sorry about that. It's just-"

"Don't worry about it. We know how you feel about funerals after...yeah."

She smiled, walking over and kissing Dustin on the cheek, both of them blushing.

"Thanks for making me laugh today Dustin. It felt nice to get out of my depressed zone for a bit while I was trapped in there."

She walked to Eleven, sitting down, her cheeks still aflame.

"What we want to know is, do you know where the gate is?" Lucas asked.

Eleven shook her head, subconsciously grabbing Jess' hand.

"Then how do you know about the Upside Down?" Lucas exclaimed.

"Lucas, calm down. Maybe she heard about it where she came from." Jess defended her, Eleven looking at her and looking down.

"Dustin, what are you doing?" Mike asked, Jess, looking to see Dustin pacing.

"Dustin? Dustin!"

"Dustin!" Lucas exclaimed.

Dustin looked up, his eyes on the boys and Jess.

"I...I need to see your compasses."

"What?"

"Your compasses. All of your compasses, right now!"

Jess was the first to grab her backpack and place her one compass on the table.

She turned to Mike and Lucas.

"Well, you heard the Bard, get your compasses, you slowpokes!"

X

Mike and Lucas placed their compasses on the table, Dustin realigning them.

"What's exciting about this?"

"Well, they're all facing north, right?"

"Yeah, so?" Lucas says, shrugging.

"Well, that's not true north," Dustin explained.

Jess looked at the compasses and gasped, Dustin, grinning at her reaction, pleased to see she had caught on to what he meant.

"What do you mean?" Mike asked.

"He means exactly what he just said, that's not true north," Jess explained for Dustin, who opened his mouth to explain it himself.

Mike looked at Dustin and Jess, both giving them 'are you fucking dumb?' looks and he had to fight the inner urge to snort at the two's similarities.

"Are you both seriously this dense?"

Lucas shrugged, causing Jess groan.

"Dustin, may I explain what I figured out what you meant in a second to these two numbskulls?" she asked him.

He gives her the floor, dramatically exiting the scene.

"The sun rises in the east, and it sets in the west. Right?"

They both nod, Dustin giggling at her being dramatic with her voice while explaining this is 'stupid version'.

"Which means that's true north," she says, pointing towards her west.

"So what you're saying is the compasses are broken," Mike says, causing an eye-roll from Dustin.

She slapped her forehead, groaning and muttering things in Spanish.

"Do you even understand how a compass works you dipshit? Do you fucking see a battery pack on this?" she says grabbing a compass and showing it to him, her patience wearing thin.

"No."

"No, you don't, Because it doesn't fucking need one. The needle's naturally drawn to the Earth's magnetic North Pole."

"So, what's wrong with them?" Lucas asked, looking at her.

"Well," Dustin says, stepping in. "That's what I couldn't figure out, but then I remembered. You can change the direction of a compass with a magnet. If there's a presence of a more powerful magnetic field, the needle deflects to that power. And then I remembered what Mr. Clarke said. The gate would have so much power-"

"It could disrupt the electromagnetic field." Mike finished for him, Jess sighing and saying 'Finally!' under her breath.

"Exactly."

"Meaning, if we follow the compasses' north..."

"They should lead us to the gate," Jess confirms, smiling.

Mike grinned.

"The Scholar and The Bard figuring it out, huh?"

Jess shrugged, Dustin wrapping his arm around Jess.

"What can I say? We make a pretty great duo."

Jess giggled, smiling at him.

"Yes, we do."

14. Chapter 14

Summary for the Chapter:

Lucas and Mike get into a fight about Eleven, Lucas says something really sensitive to Jess that results in her running off, and Eleven flings Lucas off Mike. Result? The Party is falling apart.

The five kids were walking down the tracks, Dustin carrying the compass and leading them the way.

Jess was walking next to Eleven's right, Mike on her left.

Eleven was breathing heavily and Jess figured it was from the walking and she couldn't say they were almost there if she didn't know it herself.

Eleven grabbed onto Mike, looking at him.

"Mike."

"Yeah?"

"Turn back," she says, looking now also turning to Jess to let her know she was also included in this conversation.

"What? Why?" Jess asked, furrowing her eyebrows together.

"I'm tired."

Mike sighs.

"Look, I'm sure we're almost there. Just hold on a little longer, okay?"

Jess noticed she stopped to look back.

"¿Once? Are you okay?"

Eleven looked at Jess, frowning.

"I'm okay Jessie...just tired."

Jess sighed, looking down and Eleven took the chance to wipe her nose quickly from the blood that was running down her nose.

"Just...hold onto my hand and lean on me if you get too tired okay? It's what I do with the boys when I get really tired and we still have to keep a move on."

Eleven nodded walking towards her and grabbing her hand, both of them catching up to Mike.

Eleven grabbed onto Mike's hand and he looked at her before looking down, blushing as he intertwined his fingers with hers, just as Eleven had done with Jess' hand.

The three continued on following the tracks.

X

They were walking through the junkyard, Jess still holding onto Eleven's hand.

Dustin stopped, looking up.

"Oh, no."

"'Oh, no'? What's, 'Oh, no'?" Lucas asked.

"We're headed back home," Dustin says, turning to the boys and girls.

"What?" Mike exclaims, Jess, looking around and gasping.

"Holy shit, we are."

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah, I'm sure. Setting sun, right there. We looped right back around."

"And you're just realizing this now?" Lucas asked.

"Why is this all on me?"

"Because you're the compass genius!"

"What do yours say?"

Jess looked at her compass, as did Mike and Lucas.

"North." the three said.

Lucas sighed, Jess groaning.

"Make no damn sense."

"Maybe the gate moved," Mike suggested.

"No, I don't think it's the gate. I think it's something else screwing with the compasses." Dustin says.

"Maybe," Jess says, shrugging.

"Maybe it's something here," Mike says.

"No, it has to be like a super magnet."

"It's not a magnet," Lucas says, now turning to Jess and Eleven, glaring at Eleven.

"She's been acting weirder than normal. If she can slam doors with her mind, she can definitely screw up a compass."

"LUCAS!" Jess exclaimed, her face turning red.

"Why would she do that?" Mike questioned.

"Because she's trying to sabotage our mission. Because she's a traitor!"

He started walking up towards her, Jess glaring at Lucas.

"Lucas, what are you doing?" Mike asked, walking towards him, Eleven getting a fearful look in her eyes and squeezed Jess' hand tightly.

"Lucas Sinclair, think about what you're doing," Jess warned, narrowing her eyes.

"You did it, didn't you? You don't want us to reach the gate. You don't want us to find Will." Lucas asks, ignoring Jess' warning.

"Lucas, come on, seriously, just leave her alone!" Mike exclaims, Jess pushing Eleven behind her, glaring at Lucas.

"Lucas Sinclair, I'm warning you. BACK.OFF." she hissed.

"Admit it," Lucas demanded.

"No." Eleven whispers.

"Admit it!" Lucas roared, causing Eleven to flinch, grabbing her arm, blood staining the jacket sleeve on the jacket she had on.

"Fresh blood. I knew it!" Lucas exclaimed, hitting Eleven's arm down,

Jess hugging her protectively, her blood running hot.

"Lucas, come on!" Mike exclaimed.

"I saw her wiping her nose on the tracks! She was using her powers!"

"Bull! That's old blood. Right, El?" Mike exclaims, turning to Eleven.

Eleven looked guilty, removing herself from Jess.

She didn't deserve to be comforted.

She knew that.

"Right, El?" Mike asked.

"¿Once? Is it old blood or not?" Jess asked calmly, making Eleven's lips tremble at how dangerously calm she sounded to her compared to her threatening Lucas.

She shook her head, sniffing.

"It's...not..." she says, choking, on the verge of crying.

"It's not safe," she says, looking at Mike, and then at Jess.

"What did I tell you? She's been playing us from the beginning!" Lucas exclaimed.

"That's not true. She helped us find Will!" Mike defended her.

"Find Will? Find Will? Where is he, then? Huh? I don't see him."

"Yeah, you know what I mean."

"No, I actually don't. Just think about it, Mike. She could've just told us where the Upside Down was right away, but she didn't. She just made us run around like headless chickens."

"Dustin stop this please, I'm on the verge of drawing first blood with Lucas if he keeps running his mouth," Jess asks, Dustin nodding.

"All right, calm down," Dustin says, trying to pull them apart.

"No!" Lucas yelled, pushing Dustin away.

"She used us, all of us! Especially Jess!"

Jess furrowed her eyebrows together.

Especially her?

"She helped just enough so she could get what she wants. Food and a bed. She's like a stray dog."

"LUCAS!" Jess yelled.

"Screw you, Lucas!" Mike yelled.

"No! Screw you, Mike. You're blind...blind because you like that a girl that isn't Jess isn't grossed out by you! And speaking of Jess,"

He turned to her.

"Jess' also blind enough to consider the traitor her NEW sister! She's basically replacing Gabby!"

"LUCAS YOU SON OF A BITCH SHUT UP!" Dustin roared.

"LUCAS TAKE THAT BACK!" Mike yelled.

Jess' eyes widened, her mouth parting, her eyes watering with tears.

"But wake up, you two! Wake the hell up!" Lucas yelled, not hearing Dustin or Mike.

"She knows where Will is, and now she's just letting him die in the Upside Down!"

"Shut up!" Mike yelled.

"For all we know, it's her fault."

"Shut up!"

"We're looking for some stupid monster...but did you ever stop to think that maybe she's the monster?"

Eleven gasps, reaching out to hold Jess' hand but she turned to see Jess was gone.

She had run off.

"I SAID SHUT UP!" Mike yelled before tackling Lucas.

"Stop!" Eleven shouted.

"Knock it off, you idiots!" Dustin exclaims, waiting for Jess to yell something at them but when he turned to look where she was, he noticed that she was gone as well.

"Stop it!" Eleven yelled again.

"Mike, get off!"

"Stop it!"

Lucas was on top of Mike, about to punch him when Eleven screamed, flinging Lucas off him.

Lucas hit a small wall of metal, knocking him unconscious.

"Jesus!" Dustin exclaimed, running to Lucas and Mike followed.

"Lucas! Lucas! Lucas, are you alright? Lucas."

"Lucas, come on!"

"Lucas, wake up! Lucas."

"Come on, Lucas!" Dustin exclaimed.

Mike turned to Eleven, his anger rising so high he didn't notice Jess was gone.

"Why would you do that?"

Eleven started to cry.

"What's wrong with you?!"

Eleven let the tears run down as Mike's yell from when they found Will's body rang in her memory.

"What is wrong with you?"

She suddenly had a flashback to when she first encountered the...monster. She ran, of course, being terrified and no one was there to comfort her.

She sobbed, tears running down.

She wanted Jess.

"Come on, wake up. Come on!" Dustin exclaimed.

"Lucas...Lucas, come on!" Mike exclaims, shaking him.

Lucas lifted his head, his eyes still closed.

Dustin chuckles in relief, while Mike exhales his breath he didn't know he was holding.

"Lucas."

Lucas got up in a sitting position.

"Lucas, you okay?"

Lucas looked at them both and around their surroundings.

He noticed Jess wasn't there anymore.

"Lucas...Lucas, how many fingers am I holding up? Lucas how many fingers?"

"Let me see your head."

Lucas hit Mike's hand off him.

"Get off of me!"

"Just...Lucas. Lucas, let me see."

"Get off of me!"

Lucas walked off.

"Lucas, come on."

"Let him go. Man, let him go."

Mike turned around and noticed that Eleven was gone.

"Where is El?" Mike asked.

He swallowed, breathing heavily.

"EL?!" Mike yelled.

"EL!"

"Eleven!"

"EL! ELEVEN!"

"EL!"

"ELEVEN!"

Dustin froze, remembering Lucas yelling at Jess and suddenly remembering as well that Jess had also run off.

"Oh no...JESS!" he yelled, catching Mike's attention, and making him remember what happened as well.

"Oh, god...JESS!"

"JESSICA!"

"JESS!"

"JESS! JESSICA!"

"JESS!"

"JESSICA!"

X

Jess was in her house, sobbing on her bed, pressing a photo close to her heart, curled up in a ball.

The picture she was holding close to her, was a picture of her dead sister Gabriella, or as she and the boys called her before she died, Gabby.

15. Chapter 15

Summary for the Chapter:

Jess is upset with Mike for yelling at Eleven without thinking of what he was saying and tells him to 'think before he talks'. Dustin comes over and hugs Jess.

Mike was worried.

EXTREMELY worried.

First of all, Eleven didn't come home last night, neither did Jess.

Second of all, Mike regretted yelling at Eleven for flinging Lucas off him.

She didn't mean to hit him against that wall of metal, it was an accident.

But third of all, he knew Jess was extremely upset, and that was all thanks to Lucas for accusing her of replacing Gabby.

He groaned, covering his face with his hands.

Why did he have to bring up Gabby?! And on the day they had Will's funeral?!

They all swore to never bring up Gabby or talk about her unless Jess mentions her, and Lucas threw that out of the window, and in the WORST way possible!

He drew first blood on Jess, and even though it wasn't a physical attack, it was an EMOTIONAL attack.

Dustin was extremely worried as well, and he made Mike promise him that he'll call him as SOON as he knew where she was or if she came home.

Mike made him promise the same thing, just in case she went to his house and not his.

Mike looked over at the door and to Eleven's fort.

He felt sudden anger and regret wash over him, as he stood up and walked over towards the fort and started destroying it, throwing the chair and blanket aside and started kicking it.

He was so upset that he didn't hear the door open and the gasp that came when the person saw what he was doing.

All he felt was someone pulling him back.

"MIKE!! STOP IT!!"

He froze turning to see Jess, still holding onto his arm.

She looked fresh as a daisy.

"JESS!"

He hugged her tightly, causing Jess to yelp, breathing heavily from the surprise attack.

"Where were you?! Dustin and I were worried sick!"

"I-I..."

She looked down, her forehead bangs covering her eyes.

"I went back to my house and I fell asleep crying," she admitted, looking at him again.

Mike noticed the photo she was carrying, the faded picture of Gabby.

"I...I thought I would come back after I calmed down because I didn't

want El to see me like that, like you guys did that year, and I would tell her the truth and tell her about Gabby and how she...died."

Mike frowned, looking at her.

"What Lucas said wasn't-"

"I know Mike, I'm not stupid. Of course, El isn't a replacement for my sister, she never was. No one could replace Gabby, not even if they tried. Gabby will ALWAYS have a place in my heart...same as Eleven. No one could replace her. And I don't think they could with her powers..."

They both laughed, Jess' nose wrinkling up in a cute way.

"But, even if they did, they couldn't replace her. No one could. El is El and Gabby is Gabby. They're two different people that have places in my heart. They're both my sisters."

Mike smiled and she smiled back, only to frown, realizing the big thing.

"Wait...where IS El?"

Mike gulped, praying to God he would survive the latina's anger after she found out that El ran away shortly after she did because he...yelled at her.

"Uh, she...she ran away shortly after you did."

"Why?"

"I...I...uh...I yelled at her..."

Jess' eyes narrowed.

"Why would you yell at her?"

"Lucas and I...were still yelling at each other and Lucas was throwing all these insults towards El and I kept telling him to shut up. But, what he called her last was the breaking point for me and El."

"What did he call her?"

"He said that she was the monster."

Mike froze when Jess' eyes widened, her bright blue eyes burning with angry fire.

"What?!"

"Yeah, so I...I tackled him, and we were fighting each other. El was screaming at us to stop while Dustin was telling us to quit it but we didn't stop. Then one thing led to another, Lucas was on top of me, about to punch me when Eleven screamed and flung him off me, causing him to hit an iron wall, knocking him unconscious."

Jess widened her eyes.

"I may be super furious right now at Lucas but, was he okay?"

"Yeah he was, took us a while to wake him up though. But, while we were trying to wake him up I yelled at El."

"What did you yell at her?"

"I yelled at her why would she do that and...."

Mike hesitated, looking down in regret.

"What was wrong with her..."

Jess groaned, slapping her forehead.

"Of course, you did. Of course, you did!"

She sighs in exasperation.

"Jess, I really, really do regret yelling at her like that. I was just angry and upset and...I wasn't thinking right..."

She sighs, looking at the freckled boy.

"Mike you need to think before you act out in anger. I mean, look what happened with Lucas yesterday. He was upset and angry that El messed with the compasses even if her reasoning for doing that was completely justified and now our Party is tearing apart; Lucas is still probably upset about it, El ran away, I ended up back in that depressed zone for the whole night, you ended up being worried sick about the two of us going missing for the night, and Dustin-"

Her eyes widened.

"Fuck! Dustin! He doesn't know that-"

"Whoa, hey calm down. Let's call him."

X

Dustin was riding his bike to Mike's house as quickly as he could, eager to see Jess.

He was so worried about her.

When he got there and knocked on the door, it was Jess who answered, smiling at him.

"Dustin! I'm so-"

He interrupted her by throwing his arms around her, hugging her tightly.

"Damn, first Mike now you?"

"What did you expect, we were worried sick about you!" he exclaimed, sighing as Jess hugged him back.

"Sorry I worried you guys, I just...needed to get out of there before things got...really ugly," she mumbled, sighing.

"I'm guessing Mike told you what happened huh?"

She nodded, sighing.

"I can't believe Lucas said that about El. I mean, come on! Her reasons for messing with the compasses was completely justified!"

"Even if you were tired and complaining a bit about how much longer it'll take?" Dustin teased.

She scoffs, hitting him on the shoulder.

"Um anyways...how are you? After Lucas mentioned-"

"Yeah, uh, I'm fine. I cried all my tears at my house last night."

Dustin groaned, glaring at Mike who was watching the two.

"I TOLD you we should have checked back her house!"

"I didn't know she was going to be there!"

Jess giggled, sighing.

Well, at least three members of the Party were still together.

Now they just need to reconcile with Lucas and find El...and then find Will.

16. Chapter 16

Summary for the Chapter:

After a failed attempt to get Lucas to shake Mike's hand and apologize to Jess, they go to search for Eleven.

"I just...I can't believe she didn't come back." Mike sighed, pacing.

"She's gotta be close," Dustin says, reassuring Mike and Jess, who was also very worried.

"She said it wasn't safe. She just messed up the compasses because she wanted to protect us. She didn't betray us!" Mike exclaimed.

"Mike, calm down."

"I shouldn't have yelled at her. I never should've done that."

"Mike this isn't your fault," Jess says, looking at him.

"Yeah, it's Lucas'," Mike says.

"It wasn't his fault either...well...except for the part of accusing Jess," Dustin says, pausing and adding the last part.

Mike stopped and looked at Dustin, Jess doing the same thing.

"It wasn't his fault?"

"No."

"So you're saying he wasn't way out of line?" Mike asked.

"Totally, but so were you!" Dustin exclaimed.

"What?"

"And so was Eleven."

"How was Eleven way out of- oh," Jess says, before rolling her eyes as Dustin nodded at her before turning to Mike.

But, Dustin was right.

Eleven was out of line for messing with the compasses.

"Oh, give me a break!" Mike groaned.

"No, Mike, you give me a break! All three of you were being a bunch of little assholes! Jess and I were the only reasonable ones. The only reason she ran off was because of what Lucas said. But the bottom line is...you pushed first. And you know the rule. You draw first blood..."

Jess' eyes widened, her jaw opening.

"Are you kidding?!"

"No! No way! I'm not shaking his hand." Mike exclaimed, crossing his arms.

"You're shaking his hand!"

"No, I'm not!"

"This isn't a discussion. This is the rule of law. Obey or be banished from the party. Do you want to be banished?"

Mike sighed.

"No."

"Good. Besides, you're not the only one who needs to shake hands. Lucas needs too as well for drawing first blood with Jess."

Jess groaned.

"He's going to do a lot more than shake hands with me for me to consider him my friend again."

Dustin nodded, getting his jacket and bag.

"Where are we going?"

"What do you think? We're going to get Lucas. And then we're gonna find Eleven." he says, throwing him his backpack.

X

The three rode to Lucas', Jess keeping a blank face the entire ride there.

Mike rang the doorbell, Jess standing next to Dustin.

A minute of waiting, Lucas opened the door, greeting Mike with a glare and a side glance at Jess who, if looks could kill, he would have been very dead.

"What do you want?"

Mike glared at him, and Dustin, having enough of him acting like a child, hit him, causing Mike to sigh.

"I drew first blood, so..."

He holds his hand out, making it clear that he was shaking his hand.

Lucas looked at it and back at him.

X

Lucas was walking back and forth, thinking of something.

Jess tapped her foot, still giving him that glare that always scared the boys when she was ready to go latina angry at them and they can assure you, it's not a pretty sight.

He stops.

"Ok, I'll shake."

Mike holds out his hand, Dustin grinning.

"On one condition," he says, making Mike look up and Dustin's grin disappear.

"We forget the weirdo, and go straight to the gate," Lucas says, making Jess clench her fists in anger.

"Then the deal's off!" Mike exclaimed.

"Fine!"

"FINE!"

"No, no, not fine! Guys seriously?!" Dustin exclaimed, Jess, rolling her eyes.

"Do you even remember what happened on the Bloodstone Pass?"

"I thought we agreed to never speak of that Dustin, it was our lowest point of playing Dungeons and Dragons!" Jess exclaimed, looking at him.

The boys just looked at each other, Mike shrugging.

Dustin looked at them, shocked that Jess was the only one besides him that remembered.

He sighed.

"We couldn't agree on what path to take, so we split up the party and those trolls took us out one by one. And it all went to shit. And we were all disabled! So we stick together, no matter what!" Dustin exclaimed, yelling the last two sentences, making Jess flinch.

"Yeah, I agree. But this is the party, right here in this room."

"El is one of us now," Mike says, Jess walking next to him.

"I agree with Mike, she's one of us," Jess says, crossing her arms.

"Um, no, she's not. Not even close! Never will be. She's a liar, a traitor-"

"No, she's not! She was just trying to protect us! That was the ONLY reason why she fucked up the compasses Sinclair!" Jess roared, making Lucas flinch at how furious and angry she sounded.

"Yeah! She was just trying to keep us safe! She didn't mean to hurt you. It was an accident!" Mike argued.

"An accident?"

"Alright, accident or not...admit it, it was a little awesome," Dustin says, making Jess giggle and smile at him.

"Part of me wishes I stayed a bit longer so I could've seen her done that. It sounds pretty badass," she says.

"Awesome?! Badass?!"

"Yeah, she threw you in the air with her mind!" Dustin says.

"I could have been killed!"

"Which is exactly why we need her. She's a weapon! Do you seriously wanna fight the Demogorgon with your wrist rocket? That's like R2-D2 going to fight Darth Vader. We're no use to Will if we're dead."

Lucas sighed.

"If you three wanna waste your time looking for a traitor, go ahead, 'cause I'm not spending my time on her anymore. No way! I'm going

to the gate. I'm going to find Will." he says, pushing Mike and Dustin aside, freezing when he made eye contact with Jess, her eyes glowing with angry fire.

"Asshole," she growled before leaving to outside.

"What was that about?" Lucas asked.

"Oh, I don't know, Mr. 'She's basically replacing Gabby'." Dustin mocks, walking past Lucas with Mike following behind him.

Lucas furrowed his eyebrows before he realized what he meant.

"Oh shit...that was an asshole thing to say." he groaned, hitting his forehead.

X

"This is weird without Lucas," Dustin admitted, as the three of them rode down the neighborhood to search for Eleven.

"He should have shaken my hand, AND apologized to Jess," Mike says, Jess, looking to Mike before looking back to the road.

"He's just jealous," Dustin says.

"What are you talking about?"

Dustin sighs.

"Sometimes, your total obliviousness just blows my mind."

Dustin looks at Mike.

"He's your best friend, right?"

"Yeah...I mean, I don't know."

"It's fine. I get it. I didn't get here until the fourth grade. He had the advantage of living next door. But none of that matters. What matters is that he is your best friend. And then this girl shows up and starts living in your basement, and all you ever want to do is pay attention to her."

"That's not true."

"Yes, it is. And you know it. And he knows it. But no one ever says anything until you both start punching and yelling at each other like goblins with intelligence scores of zero. Now everything's weird."

"He's not my best friend."

Dustin scoffs.

"Yeah, right."

Mike sighs.

"I mean, he is, but so are you. And so is Jess. And so is Will." he says, making Jess smile at him.

"Can't have more than one best friend."

"Says who?"

"Says logic."

"Well, I call bull on your logic, because you're my best friend, too."

The boys smile at each other.

"Okay," Dustin says, making Jess grin at the two.

She turns to look to see the store had a police car parked there, the manager talking to two sheriffs.

"Woah."

"You don't think..."

"Uh...definitely," Mike says.

"Let's go then!" Jess says, riding her bike with the boys past the store, not aware that they were being watched.

17. Chapter 17

Summary for the Chapter:

El saves Jess and Mike from a possible death and learns of Jess' dead sister 'Gabby'.

El was sitting in the forest, eating the Eggos she stole from the store when she heard Dustin yelling out for her from a distance.

Then it was followed by Mike calling out to her as well, making her chewing slow.

She stopped when she heard Jess call out to her as well, calling her-

"¡Once!"

"Eleven! El!"

"El!"

"Eleven!"

"¡Once!"

"Eleven!"

Mike stopped, turning to Dustin and Jess.

"Hey, stop. Do you hear that?"

"What?"

"El!"

Jess looked around, swallowing.

"El?"

Mike looked around, freezing when he saw James and Troy.

Jess' breathing became heavy, panting quickly in fear.

"Hey, there, Frogface, Bookworm."

Jess gasped when she saw Troy had a knife.

"Toothless."

"Shit! Run, Jess! Mike!" Dustin yelled, grabbing onto Jess' shoulder, all of them abandoning their bikes as they ran the opposite direction.

"What?"

"Run! Come on!"

Jess was crying, running at full force, outrunning Mike and Dustin by a few feet, making sure to look back to check if they were still behind her.

"You're dead, Wheeler, Hernandez!"

"Move, Mike! Jess!" Dustin yelled.

"Mike, Jess, come on, run!"

X

Jess and the boys were running side by side, Jess still crying from fear since Troy was behind them.

Dustin groaned.

"Cramp!"

"Just keep going!" Mike yelled, Jess, grabbing Dustin's hand and pulling him with her, not wanting Troy to get him.

"Keep going!"

Jess could hear Troy catching up with them and that only made her run faster, pulling Dustin with her.

The three of them stopped when they saw James come from the direction they were headed.

"Shit!" Dustin exclaimed.

"Fuck!" Jess cries, panicking.

Jess and Mike both grabbed rocks, while Dustin grabbed a stick.

"Stay back! Don't come any closer!" Mike warned.

"Fuck off!" Jess screamed.

The boys had the three cornered and while it seemed stupid for three kids to be scared of two school bullies, one had a knife.

Jess may have her great-grandfather's rifle in her backpack but, she wasn't going to shoot some bully, no matter how much he deserved it in her eyes.

Mike threw the rock, missing James.

James scoffs.

"Nice throw numbnuts-"

SMACK!

Jess panted as the rock hit James' forehead, causing him to curse out in pain.

Dustin yelled his battle cry, causing Jess to turn around as he ran at Troy with his stick, only for Troy to grab him and hold the knife close to his face.

"NO!" Jess screamed, Mike gasping.

"Get off! Get off me!"

"Let him go! Let him go!!" Mike yelled.

"Stay back, or I cut him!" Troy threatened.

"What do you want?" Jess asked, trying to buy Dustin more time.

"I want to know how you both did it!"

"How we did what?" Mike asked.

"I know you did something to me. Some nerdy science shit to make me do that."

"You mean piss your pants?" Jess and Mike asked, causing them to look at each other with a look that yelled, 'Not now!'.

"Our friend has superpowers, and she squeezed your tiny bladder with her mind."

"Shut up! I think I should save Toothless here a trip to the dentist. Help him lose the rest of his baby teeth."

"DON'T YOU FUCKING DARE!" Jess screamed.

"Let him go. Let him go!" Mike yelled.

"I'll let him go, sure. But first...it's your turn. Both of you."

"Our turn for what?"

"Wet yourselves."

"What?" Jess and Mike asked, both equally confused.

"Jump..."

They both turned to see the cliff and Jess didn't know about Mike but, she felt her body froze, pure fear running through her veins.

"Or Toothless here gets an early trip to the dentist."

"Stop! No!" Dustin exclaimed.

Jess bit her lip, tugging at it as tears streamed down her cheeks, her eyebrows furrowing.

She whimpered as Troy neared the knife closer and closer to Dustin, Dustin trying to avoid it.

"I'll cut him right now!"

Jess chokes out a sob before running towards the cliff, only for Mike to grab her arm, stopping her.

"All right, just hold on! Hold on!" he yelled, before turning to Jess, wrapping his fingers around hers.

"Together," he muttered, her hesitating before nodding.

"Mike, Jess, don't do it. I don't need my baby teeth, Mike, Jess! Mike, Jess, seriously don't!"

Jess squeezed Mike's hand softly, as they both walked to the cliff, both breathing heavily.

They got to the edge, the wind seeming to blow harder and harder, almost tauntingly.

They got to the very edge, rocks tumbling down as their feet made contact with them.

"Mike, Jess don't do it! Seriously, don't do it, guys! Seriously, don't!"

Jess and Mike looked back at him then, back out to the water, knowing full well they weren't going to survive that fall.

"Troy, I don't think this is a good idea, man." Jess heard James say.

Apparently, he's figured out that this was going WAY too far.

"Mike, Jess, don't!"

"Dentist's office opens in five..."

Jess gripped Mike's hand tightly, tears running down her cheeks as they both breathed in and out.

"Four..."

They could hear their heartbeat pounding in their ears.

"Three..."

"Two..."

"MIKE! JESS!"

"I'm sorry Dustin..." Jess whimpered, Mike, wrapping his arms around her, Jess burying her face in his chest, closing her eyes.

"ONE!"

They both stepped over the edge, their screams lasting for a few seconds.

Troy let go of Dustin, who was panting, not believing it.

The three boys ran to the edge of the cliff, all of them frozen in shock.

"Holy shit," Dustin says, speaking for what was on all of their minds.

Mike and Jess were gasping, holding on to each other's arms as they floated in the air.

Jess whimpered, still scared to death as she stared at the water that looked dangerously close.

They suddenly were pulled up, both yelping in surprise.

They whimpered, their grips on each other's arms tightening as they floated above the cliff.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa!"

Jess made a brief eye contact with Dustin, his face mixed with shock and relief.

They floated over the boys and landed on the ground, both grunting.

Jess sat up, breathing heavily.

Her eyes widened, turning to her left and grinned, nudging Mike to look.

He does and his expression softened immediately.

The boys noticed and looked as well, Dustin's lips twitching up.

It was Eleven stomping towards them, a furious expression on her face.

Jess never looked so grateful and relieved in her life as she grinned at El, Mike simply staring at her in awe-struck.

Dustin grinned at his friend, knowing shit was about to go down because, if he learned ANYTHING about El these past few days was one, simple thing; ANYONE WHO MESSES WITH MIKE AND JESS HAS TO GO THROUGH HER.

She glared at the bullies, pushing James down onto the ground harshly with her mind.

Jess grinned wider, loving this badass side of El.

She tilted her head, a bone crack being heard as Troy dropped his knife, screaming in pain.

"She broke my arm! My arm!"

"Go," El demanded, clenching her fists angrily.

"Let's get out of here! Let's go!"

"Go!"

Dustin turned as they left, stepping forwards and yelling;

"Yeah, that's right! You better run!"

Jess started to giggle at Dustin's sudden confidence to yell at the bullies, knowing it was because El was there.

And honestly, she couldn't blame him for feeling safer now that El was there.

"She's our friend and she's crazy!"

"You come back here and she'll kill you! You hear me? She'll kill you, you sons of bitches! She'll kill you, you hear me?" he yelled, Jess laughing at his confidence.

She turned, her grin fading when she saw El fainting.

"El!" she exclaimed, running towards her, Mike following her, rushing ahead, kneeling down and shaking her softly.

"El, are you okay?" he asked.

She opened her eyes, her eyebrows furrowing as she stared at Mike, about to burst into tears.

"El?"

"Mike...I'm sorry."

"Sorry? What are you sorry for?" he asked, Jess, kneeling down, looking worriedly at El.

El swallowed before continuing.

"The gate...I opened it," she confessed, tears welling up in her eyes.

"I'm the monster," she says, making Jess widen her eyes looking at Mike who just smiles at El like she just said the most ridiculous thing ever.

"No, you're not Once," Jess says, shaking her head.

"No. No, El, you're not the monster." Mike says, agreeing with Jess.

"You saved me and Jess. Do you understand? You saved me." Mike says, Jess, smiling at El, nodding.

"Yeah, you saved us El. We're forever grateful." she smiles.

El sighs, about to burst into tears as Mike pulled her up, hugging her softly.

Jess smiled as Dustin kneeled down next to her, both of them wrapping their arms around Mike and El.

They hugged them both, their heads plopping softly on top of their heads.

El noticed how each of their hugs felt something different, yet in some ways similar.

They all felt thankful, relieved, and happy.

They also felt the main three things Jess mentioned; the feeling of being safe, loved, and cared for.

Yet, Dustin's and Jess' hug felt sibling-like, like how a friend would hug.

Like how Dustin patted her arm reassuringly, and Jess rubbed her back.

Mike's hug, however, felt more.

As if, he was meant to be more than just a friend.

Like how he gripped onto the jacket she was wearing felt loving and made her stomach have butterflies.

But now, as she turned her head to look at Jess, she smiled at her a knowing smile and Jess grinned back.

She now understood what Jess meant by how there were different ways on how people hugged.

X

As Jess was walking through the woods with El by her side, she was holding onto a picture of what Jess had said, was her little sister.

Jess explained the reason she didn't tell her at first was because then, they just had met and she didn't really like to talk about her past with strangers when it was unnecessary.

El understood and let Jess talk about 'Gabby', noticing how her eyes would light up when she mentioned a funny memory about her.

"What happened to Gabby?" El asked.

Jess frowned, looking down.

"She...was hit by a car. We were crossing the streets on our bikes. I had already crossed and when I turned to look at her, she was pedaling towards me, and I told her to look both ways to see if a car was going to pass but, of course, typical little sister, she didn't listen."

El frowned, not liking how sad Jess' voice sounded.

"So...she got hit. And we rushed her to the hospital but by the time we got there she was..."

Jess choked, covering her mouth.

"Gone?" El whispered, making Jess nod.

"Yeah...gone."

El hugged her, rubbing her back, remembering how comforting it felt when Jess did it to her.

"So, when Lucas said I was basically replacing her, it wasn't true. Gabby is Gabby and you are you. No one can replace her, even if they tried, okay? You both have special places in my heart. You're my sister El."

El looked up, smiling big.

"Sister. You're my sister."

Jess grinned, walking with the boys as they had already reached the fencing area, on their way to Mike's house.

Unknown to them, a man from Hawkin's lab was watching them.

He grabbed his walkie-talkie and pressed on the channel.

"I have eyes on 'em now. They're heading home."

X

They had reached Mike's house, walking to the basement as they pushed their bikes aside.

El looked around, suddenly getting a bad feeling as she walked in.

She just hoped she was wrong.

18. Chapter 18

Summary for the Chapter:

Jess is furious when the vans start chasing them, trying to take away her best friend from her, that she doesn't notice when a particular red liquid runs down her nose.

Jess was with Dustin as Mike was with El in the bathroom, helping her wash up.

"You scared me half to death back there," Dustin says, looking at her.

She smiles at him, shrugging.

"Well, I couldn't let them cut you, Dustin, that was the only solution at the time. Thank god for El to show up at the right time," she says, chuckling.

She looked at him, their eyes meeting.

"I won't let anything hurt you, Dustin, I swear it," she whispered.

"Then, promise me you won't do anything stupid in the process," he says, causing her to chuckle.

"I can't promise that," she states.

"Then, at least TRY to not to do anything stupid in the-"

She cuts him off by leaning in and kissing him on the lips for a brief second, causing him to freeze as she pulled back.

She searched his eyes to see if what she did would assure her that she didn't screw up their relationship as best friends.

She saw confusion, shock and disbelief swimming in his blue eyes.

That did not reassure her at all.

"Uh...um..." he stammers, Jess looking down, a red tint coming across her cheeks as he turned bright red.

"GUYS!"

They both flinched, looking at the Supercomm on the table.

It was Lucas, shouting nonsense as the signal was out of range.

Of course, interrupting an awkward moment.

"I-I'll get Mike and El." Jess stammers, rushing to the bathroom, swinging the door open.

"Guys!"

They both jump back from each other, faces red.

Jess cursed in her head for interrupting them from kissing but, now it wasn't important!

"It's Lucas, we think he's in trouble."

They both followed her to the Supercomm, Dustin looking up.

"Do you remember how he said he was looking for the gate?" he asks, looking at Mike.

"Yeah."

"What if he found it?"

Mike looked at Dustin before grabbing the Supercomm, nearing it to his ear.

Lucas was shouting, but nothing was coming out clear.

"What's he saying?"

"I don't know, he's way out of range."

Mike raised it to his ear again.

".....son of a bitch!"

"Lucas, if you can hear us, slow down. We can't understand you."

"Yes, I copy! Do you? They know about Eleven! Get out of there! They know about Eleven! The bad men are coming! All of them! Do you hear me? The bad men are coming!"

"Mad hen. Does that mean anything to you? Like a code name or something?" Dustin asked.

"The bad men are coming!"

"Bad men," Mike whispers, Jess gasping, her eyes widening.

"Bad men!"

Jess covered her mouth, shaking her head.

"Stay here," Mike tells El, running up the stairs, Dustin following.

Jess looked to El, a terrified expression on her face.

She swallowed, her fists clenching.

She wasn't going to allow it.

She ran to her backpack, unzipping it open and placing her rifle in it, packing some extra clothes and her Supercomm in as well.

She unzipped a pocket and dug in to see the necklace she made, turning to El and placing it around her neck.

El looked at it, the word *JESSIE* on it.

El looked up to see Jess had pulled a chain from under her shirt, wearing a similar necklace, except the word *ONCE* was on it.

"We stick together, no matter what," Jess says, hugging her tightly.

El nods, hugging her as well.

"MIKE!!" they heard Dustin scream, causing her to look up the stairs.

She ran up, from the living room to the kitchen.

"We need to leave...right now." Dustin was panting.

Jess froze, her jaw dropping.

THEY WERE ALREADY HERE?!

They ran out the kitchen.

"Michael!"

Mike stops and turns.

"If anyone asks where I am, I've left the country."

"What?"

X

They were all running outside, Jess's backpack slung over her shoulders, getting their bikes.

They ran out to the road, El getting on Mike's bike, holding onto him when she looked up, her breath hitching.

It was Papa.

Jess noticed how scared and vulnerable she got when she looked at him, which made her send the man a deep, angry glare, flipping him off.

"Go, go, go, go, go, go, go, go, go!" Dustin yelled, the boys and Jess starting to pedal away quickly.

Jess was pedaling fast, and ANGRY.

Two combinations that were dangerous if you're in the receiving end of it.

"Oh, my god. Oh, my god. Oh, my god. Oh, my god. Oh, my god." Dustin was saying, over and over.

"Dustin! Dustin, do you copy?"

They were now pedaling ahead of the vans, not being able to see them, which was kinda scary.

"Yeah, Lucas, they're on us."

"Where are you?"

"Cornwallis."

"Meet me at Elm and Cherry!"

"Copy. Elm and Cherry!"

"Okay!"

They rode through the front yard of a house, seeing the vans catch up to them.

"FUCK!" Jess screamed.

"Shit!" Dustin yelled.

"This way, come on!" Mike yelled.

X

They rode into a park, riding through two girls playing Pattycake.

"Out of the way! Out of the way!" Dustin yelled.

X

They caught up to Lucas, all of them stopping, Jess panting heavily.

"Lucas!"

"Where are they?"

"I-I don't know." Mike stammers.

"I think we lost them." Dustin sighs.

Suddenly, vans came in.

"I THINK WE DIDN'T!" Jess shrieked, pedaling again.

"Go, go, go, go, go!" Mike yelled.

Dustin started yelling.

"Go, go, go, go, go! Faster, faster!"

"Shit, shit, shit, shit, shit!" Dustin swore, pedaling as fast as he could.

Suddenly, a van started driving in front of them, Dustin screaming.

Jess glared at the van, pedaling faster and faster.

She was angry, SO ANGRY.

They were trying to take away her best friend.

Her sister.

She was so focused on the van that she didn't notice how El was also concentrating on the van the same way she did, focusing on her powers.

What she did notice was how the van flew upward, causing her to snap out of her concentration, staring at it in awe before it crashed behind them, blocking the vans from following them from behind.

They all looked at each other, Jess bursting out in laughter as they pedaled on, El gripping onto Mike tighter as she felt weak from using too much of her power.

What Jess didn't notice was how a trickle of blood ran down her nose as they pedaled away.

X

Mr. Brenner walked out of the van, smirking on how the two girls, whether they knew it or not, used teamwork to flip the van and send it flying into the air.

Which was why he was so interested in teaming the two up 9 years ago.

19. Chapter 19

Summary for the Chapter:

After reconciling with Lucas, he tells The Party about the lab. Unfortunately, the Bad Men are looking for them.

They were in the junkyard, where the fight happened.

Jess got out of her bike, running Mike and El, helping Mike get El off his bike.

El looked up and widened her eyes.

"Blood..." she whispered, pointing at her face.

Jess furrowed her eyebrows, Mike looking up at Jess to see what she was talking about and froze, widening his eyes.

"Jess, have you been getting the yearly nosebleeds lately?" he asked.

"Uh, no. I haven't been getting them since the year I had amnesia. Why?"

El wiped Jess's upper lip, Jess widening when blood was revealed on her hand.

"E-Even if I were still getting them, I would be needing tissues because of the amount of blood that I lose. That's j-just a drop." Jess stammered.

"Maybe you have powers like El," Mike suggested.

"How? There's no evidence that proves-"

"You helped," El says, looking at her.

Jess turned to El.

"Van. You helped. Couldn't on my own." El elaborated.

Jess swallowed.

"Well, I did feel lightheaded after seeing the van flip, but that's not important right now! Come on, you need to rest."

As they helped El out of Mike's bike, Jess told them.

"If I do have powers like El, don't tell the boys alright? At least not yet. They'll freak!" Jess asked, Mike nodding.

"Ok, it'll be our secret," he says, El nodding.

"Secret."

El held onto Mike as he helped her sit down as Lucas and Dustin catch up to them.

"Holy...holy shit! Did...did you see what she did to that van?" Dustin exclaimed, making Jess roll her eyes, chuckling.

"No Dustin, we missed it," Mike says.

"Yeah Dustin, we just went blind when El did the most badass van flip in the history of forever." She says, smiling at El, who smiled.

"You too," she whispered, only for her to hear.

Jess winked at her.

"I mean that was..." Dustin was stammering, trying to find the right words.

"Awesome."

Jess looked up to see Lucas, her grin fading.

El looked up to see Lucas, shocked to hear a compliment from him.

"It was awesome," he says, walking up to El.

Jess gave him a warning glare.

He kneeled down to her eye level and looked at El.

"Everything I said about you being a traitor and stuff...I was wrong."

El looked so relieved, her expression softening a ton.

Jess was happy that Lucas finally caught up that El was just trying to help them, but she was still heartbroken about that comment he made about Gabby.

"I'm sorry," he says, placing a hand on her shoulder.

Eleven looked at him, looking apologetic as well.

"Friends..."

she shook her head.

"Friends don't lie. I'm sorry, too."

Lucas smiled at her and she smiles back.

"Me, too."

Jess turned to see Mike holding out his hand and Lucas got up and went to Mike.

He took his hand and shook it.

Lucas turned to Jess, who still glared at him.

He walked over to her and sighed.

"Jess-"

SMACK!

El tensed when Jess' slap rang through the junkyard, not willing to bear another fight.

To her surprise, Lucas nodded.

"Yeah, I deserved that for what I said about Gabby. And probably worse too. I'm sorry. That was pretty low of me to bring her up that way and I should have known better than to think you were replacing her. You two were literally sibling goals when you two were together...and when you weren't fighting. I'm really sorry Jess." Lucas says, looking at Jess.

Tears streamed down Jess' cheeks, breathing shakily.

"God damn it Lucas!" she cried, pushing him.

El was about to stand but Mike shook his head, giving a reassuring smile.

Confused, she turned back to the two.

"God damn it!" Jess cries, pushing Lucas one last time before hugging him.

Lucas hugged her back, Jess smiling softly.

This was how the boys 'shake hands' with Jess when they 'draw first blood' with her emotionally.

By hugging her.

The Party was back in action.

X

"This is Randolph Road, right here." Lucas was saying, drawing a line of the imitation of the fences.

"The fence starts here, and goes all the way around," he says, motioning to the sticks forming a sloppy triangle shape.

"And this is the lab right here." he finishes, placing a soda can in the middle.

"The gate's gotta be there somewhere. It's gotta be."

"Well, who owns Hawkins Lab?" Dustin asked.

"Well, my parents work there but...they haven't told me anything

about it," Jess says, causing El to widen her eyes.

"The sign says 'Department of Energy'," Lucas says.

"Department of Energy? What do you think that means?" Dustin asks.

"It means government. Military." Mike says, causing Jess to widen her eyes.

"Then why does it say 'Energy'?"

"Just trust me, all right? It's military. My dad's told me before."

"Mike's right. There are soldiers out front." Lucas says, nodding.

"Do they make, like, light bulbs or something?"

"No, weapons...to fight the bad Russians, and commies and stuff." Mike says, Jess nodding, grateful that Mike said 'bad' before Russians.

"Weapons," Lucas says, looking at El.

Jess noticed his glance and widened her eyes.

"Oh, shit. Oh, fucking hell." She gasped.

El was a weapon.

"Oh, Jesus, this is bad," Dustin says.

"Really bad. The place is like a fortress."

"Well, what do we do?" Dustin asks.

"I don't know, but we can't go home. We're fugitives now." Mike says.

Dustin turned, hearing something.

"G-Guys? Do you hear that?"

They all looked up to see a helicopter coming towards them, Mike and Jess gasping.

"Holy fucking shit!" Jess yelled, getting her bike, the boys following her as she pushed her bike under a bus, pulling aside the door.

"Go, go, go, go!" Mike yelled, pushing his bike under.

"Come on, come on!" Dustin exclaimed, trying to push his bike under.

"It's stuck!"

"Let's go, let's go, let's go!"

"Hurry up! Hurry, come on!" Mike yelled.

"Come on!" Lucas exclaimed.

"Go, go, go, go, go, go!"

"¡Vamos, vamos! (Come on, come on!)"

Jess ran in the bus, the boys and El following behind her.

"Get down!" Lucas yelled.

Jess slid down, getting her backpack and removing her rifle, the sound of it being loaded heard in the bus, the helicopter is heard.

"Mental." Dustin sighs, Jess gulping as she held strong of the weapon she had yet to use to injure/kill someone with.

Shit just got real.

20. Chapter 20

Summary for the Chapter:

Hopper rescues the kids before anything bad happens, taking them back to the Byers house.

"Hey, you okay?" Jess whispered to El.

El trembled, looking up.

Mike looked at Jess, the gun she had left alone, thankfully the safety on.

"Yeah, I'm scared too." Jess whispered.

She looked at the two and grabbed her backpack, unzipping it and digging into the backpack until she found two blue in and out loop bracelets, charms dangling from them.

"Here, I made them for both of you." she whispered.

Mike took his, smiling at the charms.

It was all their nicknames with a little charm that represents them.

Dangling from the MIKE name was a Supercomm charm.

Dangling from the EL name was an Eggo charm.

And dangling from the JESS name was a Colombian flag charm.

"Pretty." El whispered, putting it on.

"What about you?" Mike asked.

Jess pulled down the left sleeve of her flannel, her own on her wrist.

They smiled at each other.

"Mike, are you there? Mike?"

Jess looked up, her eyebrows furrowing.

"You guys hear that?" Dustin asked.

"Mike, it's me, Nancy."

Mike grabbed his backpack, pulling out his Supercomm.

"Mike, are you there? Answer. Mike, we need you to answer."

"Is that your sister?" Lucas asked, causing Jess to furrow her eyebrows.

"This is an emergency, Mike. Do you copy? Mike, do you copy?"

"Okay, this is really weird." Dustin says.

"Really." Jess agreed.

Lucas grabbed the Supercomm, but Mike grabbed it back.

"Don't answer."

"She said it was an emergency."

"What if it's a trick?"

"It's your sister!"

"What if the bad people kidnapped her? What if they're forcing her to say this?"

"I need you to answer."

"It's like Lando Clarissian." Dustin says, Jess nodding.

"Don't answer."

"We need to know that you're there, Mike."

Jess froze when a new voice came in.

"Listen, kid, this is the Chief. If you're there, pick up. We know you're in trouble and we know about the girl."

Jess exchanged glances with the boys.

"Why is she with the Chief?" Lucas asked.

"How the hell does he know about..." Dustin asks, trailing off, looking at El.

"We can protect you, we can help you, but you gotta pick up. Are you there? Do you copy? Over."

Jess hesitated before grabbing the Supercomm from Mike's hand.

"Jess!"

"No, Mike! Listen, we HAVE to trust the Chief. He's our only option as of right now and we can't hide in here forever. They're eventually going to find us."

"Yeah but, you've got a gun!"

"Yes, but with limited ammo. We gotta play smart. Will you trust me on this, please?"

Mike sighs, before nodding.

Jess pulls the antenna up and answered.

"This is Jessica Hernandez. The boys and the girl are with me. Yes, we copy. We're here."

Dustin watched how serious her expression went, causing his face to flush.

X

Jess was sitting next to El, laying her head on her shoulder, watching Dustin pace back and forth, holding onto her rifle tightly.

"Will you stop pacing?" Mike asked.

"It's been way too long. You know what? Maybe you're right. Maybe this is all a trap, and the bad men are coming to get us right now!" Dustin exclaims.

"It's not a trap. Why would the chief set us up? Nancy, maybe, but the Chief?" Lucas says, causing Mike to throw his hands up in a 'are you serious?' way, causing Jess to giggle.

"Lando Calrissian."

"Will you shut up about Lando?"

"I don't feel good about this. I don't feel good about this!"

"When do you feel good about anything?!"

"OH MY GOD, ¡CÁLLATE!" Jess exclaimed, making them both shut up.

They heard vehicles approach, causing all of them to look out the window.

Jess paled when they saw the bad men's cars pull up.

"Shit!" Dustin swore.

"Fucking hell!" Jess exclaimed.

"Go, go, go, go." Mike says, all of them running to the back of the bus, Jess hiding with Mike and El, cocking her gun.

"Lando." Dustin says.

"You think they saw us?" Lucas asked.

"Both of you, shut up." Mike says, El peeking over the chair.

Jess frowned, leaving from her crouched position from the back.

"Jess, what the hell are you doing?"

"Shut up!" She hissed, getting to the door, raising her rifle, removing the safety.

Dustin watched as she breathed in and out slowly, her finger over the trigger.

'Holy shit, Jess is so badass.' he thought.

The door opened, and a bad man came in only to get knocked out before Jess could shoot.

"Hey!"

They heard a body collapse.

"What the-"

Another body collapsed.

The door creams open to reveal the Chief, walking in.

He took a moment to look at Jess with her rifle, internally chuckling at her being prepared for a fight.

"All right, let's go."

Jess grabbed her backpack and walked towards the door, looking back to see that the boys and El had hesitated, still wondering if they could trust him or not.

"Let's go!"

The boys grabbed their backpacks and followed the Chief and Jess out the bus.

X

When they got to their destination, it was at the Byers house.

Jess looked up and sighed out in relief, running to Joyce.

"Mama Byers!"

Joyce hugged the girl as she wrapped her arms around the woman

tightly, smiling as her mother figure rubbed her back.

"Oh, hey sweetheart. Hey." Joyce whispered to her, stroking her hair.

"Mike. Oh, my god. Mike!"

Jess turned to see Nancy had run up to Mike and hugged him.

"I was so worried about you."

"Yeah, uh...me, too."

Jess giggled, knowing he hadn't thought of Nancy until she had called them.

Nancy looked up to see El, and Jess tensed, preparing herself to kill Nancy for whatever insult she was going to-

"Is that my dress?"

Jess relaxed, leaning to Joyce as she hugged the Colombian girl, smiling as El looked at Dustin who gave her a reassuring smile.

They had a LOT of explaining to do.

X

"Okay, so, in this example, we're the acrobat. Will and Barbara, and that monster, they're this flea. And this is the Upside Down, where Will is hiding. Mr. Clarke said the only way to get there is through a rip of time and space." Mike explained to the adults and highschoolers.

"A gate." Dustin clarified.

"That we tracked to Hawkins Lab." Lucas says.

"With our compasses." Jess finished.

The adults and highschoolers gave confused glances.

"Okay, so the gate has a really strong electromagnetic field, and that can change the directions of a compass needle." Dustin explained.

"Is this gate underground?" The Chief asked.

"Yes." El answered, causing Jess to place her hand on her shoulder.

"Near a large water tank?"

El nodded.

"Yes."

"H-How do you know all that?" Dustin asked.

"He's seen it." Mike realized.

"Is there any way that you could...that you can reach Will? That you can talk to him in this-"

"The Upside Down."

"Down. Yeah."

El nodded.

"And my friend Barbara? Can you find her, too?" Nancy asked.

El looked at her, grabbing ahold of Jess' hand and squeezing it gently.

She could.

And she will.

21. Chapter 21

Summary for the Chapter:

After a getting a flashback from her past that included El, Jess realizes that they needed a Sensory Deprivation Tank to help El communicate with Barb and Will.

The static of the Supercomm is all that's being heard as El tried to find Will and Barbara.

Jess stood between Mike and Dustin, watching El twitch her closed eyes, the lights flickering on and off.

El opened her eyes, the lights staying on.

Jess widened her eyes as El's face became sad, defeated almost.

"¿Once?"

She looked up, her eyebrows furrowing in sadness.

"I'm sorry."

"What? What's wrong? What happened?" Joyce asked.

"I can't find them." El says, her voice breaking.

Jess immediately walked up to El and wrapped an arm around her, rubbing her shoulder.

El looked at her, her lips trembling.

"Follow me."

X

They were in the bathroom, El turning on the water faucet on the sink, Jess closing the door.

She turned to see El look in the mirror, tears running down her cheeks as she wiped her face with her hands.

"Hey, are you okay?"

El turned to Jess, disappointment clear.

"I failed."

"No you didn't El, you're just tired. You used too much of your power." Jess says, walking to her.

El sobs, hugging the Colombian tightly.

Jess hugged back, kissing the side of her head.

El looked to see the bath, her eyebrows furrowing.

"Jessie?"

"Yeah, Once?"

She looked at her.

"Another way. The bath."

Jess furrowed her eyebrows, looking at the bath.

Suddenly, she gasped, her eyes widening as a sharp pain occurred in her head...

She was wearing a suit of some sort, stepping up the stairs.

She got into the big tank of water and salt, a helmet placed on her head, her braid floating as she was lowered deeper into the tank.

She made eye contact with her mom, dad, an elderly man, and a little girl her age with a shaved head, waving at her.

Then it went black.

Jess gasped, looking at El.

"The bath, I remember."

El widened her eyes.

"I-It was one of my first tests, but, I remember how mom, dad, and an elderly man was waving at me. But...I saw you...except, you looked younger. Like around the age of 5."

El gasped.

"...I know it's important but, not right now. We need to find Will and Barbara. Will we be able to find them in the bath?" Jess asked.

El nodded.

"Yes."

X

They both walked out the bathroom, approaching the group.

"The bath." El says.

"What?" Joyce asks, turning to the girls.

"I can find them. In the bath."

Everyone looked at her.

"A sensory deprivation tank to be specific." Jess elaborated.

"H-How are we going to build one?" Nancy asked.

Jess shot a glance at Dustin.

He sighed.

"We know one person who might know how."

X

"Mr. Clarke? It's Dustin."

Jess stood next to him, watching him talk to their science teacher.

"Yeah, yeah. I just, I...I have a science question."

Jess smiled, watching his face scrunch up.

It was cute.

"Do you know anything about sensory deprivation tanks? Specifically how to build one?"

Jess snorted, giggling under her breath as Dustin sent her a nervous grin.

"Fun."

She covered her mouth, giggling hysterically.

The group just watched from a distance, Nancy walking to Mike and whispered to him;

"Are they dating?"

Mike rolled his eyes.

"I'd be lying if I said they were."

"You always say we should never stop being curious. To always open any curiosity door we find."

Jess grinned, nodding along.

"Why are you keeping this curiosity door locked?"

Jess silently clapped for him, grinning widely as he bowed dramatically to her, causing the group to roll their eyes.

They were such a couple.

He then shot up, and Jess nodded.

"We need a pencil and some paper!"

X

"Uh-huh....uh-huh. How much? Uh-huh...Yep, all right. Yeah, we'll be careful. Definitely. All right, Mr. Clarke. Yeah, I'll see you on Monday. I'll see you on Monday, Mr. Clarke. Bye." Dustin says, finishing up the ingredients they needed to make the sensory deprivation tank.

He turned off the phone, looking up to Joyce.

"Do you still have that kiddie pool we bobbed for apples in?"

"I think so. Yeah."

"Yeah."

"Good, then we just need salt. Lots of it."

"How much is 'lots'?" Hopper asked, causing Jess to look over Dustin's

shoulder, their faces really close.

Both their cheeks burned as they answered;

"1,500 pounds."

"Well, where are we gonna get that much salt?" Nancy asked.

X

They were back at school, Dustin and Lucas rolling the kiddie pool through the gym.

"This damn thing is heavy." Dustin panted.

"So, I see the tension between you and Jess." Lucas teased.

"Shut up Lucas! Now is not the time!" Dustin exclaimed, cheeks burning red.

"Jeez, normally you would play along with having feelings for her but now you're telling me to back off. What happened?"

"It's none of your business, alright?" Dustin snaps, as they undid the rope.

Lucas frowned, raising an eyebrow.

"If you say so."

The pulled apart the kiddie pool.

"It's upside down."

"No, this way."

They pulled it back, becoming confused on how to set it up.

"Okay, um..."

"How does this even work?"

"Try that side."

"Son of a bitch!"

"Pull it back. Pull it back."

"I am!"

"One, two, three!"

They pulled it back only for it to fall again.

"Shit!"

X

Jess followed Mike and Nancy to get the hoses.

Nancy tried to open the door only to realize it was locked.

She stepped aside to find a rock when Mike slammed himself against the door, immediately wincing in pain.

"Stand back."

They both turned to see Nancy had a rock, slamming it against the lock, opening the door.

"Whoa."

They walked in, grabbing what they needed and placing it in a wheelbarrow.

X

They walked back to the school in silence, that is until Nancy spoke up.

"What did she even eat?"

"What?"

"Eleven."

"Oh. Candy, leftovers, Eggos...she really likes Eggos."

"I knew you two were acting weird. I just...I thought it was because of Will."

"I knew you were acting weird, too. I thought it was 'cause of Steve."

Jess snorted.

"Hey..." Nancy says, placing the wheelbarrow down.

"No more secrets, okay? From now on we tell each other everything."

"Okay. Do you like Jonathan now?" Mike asked.

"What? No. No, it's...it's not...it's not like that." she says, shaking her head.

Mike pursed his lips, nodding.

"And do you like Eleven?" Nancy asked, causing Jess to smirk, raising her eyebrow.

"What? No! Ew. Gross!" Mike exclaimed, causing Jess to giggle because that was a lie.

He DID like Eleven.

Just like how she liked Dustin.

22. Chapter 22

Summary for the Chapter:

Jess comforts El as she finds Will, and goes to talk to Nancy about her grieving for Barb.

Jess sat between Mike and Dustin and Lucas checked the temperature of the water.

"COLDER!!"

Lucas checked after a second and yelled;

"WARMER!!"

He checked again and yelled;

"Right there!"

X

After Jonathan and Hopper poured the salt in, Dustin grabbed an egg and poured it in the water, only for it to sink.

"WE NEED MORE SALT!!" Jess yelled.

X

After Jonathan and Hopper poured more salt in, Dustin plopped the egg on the water, Jess placing a hand on his shoulder as he bit his lip, sighing in relief when it floated.

"We got it!!" Jess called.

X

Mike placed his Supercomm down turning up the static.

X

El was rolling down her socks, taking them off and setting them aside, taking off the watch Mike gave her and handed it back to him.

She hesitated before grabbing the goggles that were covered with duck tape, putting it on.

X

Jess held onto Mike's hand as they watched El get on the kiddie pool,

laying down and floated around.

The electricity started to surge, the lights went out.

Everyone looked up for a second before looking back at El.

Minutes passed before she spoke.

"Barbara?"

Jess heard Nancy gasp, and against her better judgment, she placed her hand on top of hers.

El started to pant unevenly, causing Jess to go where Joyce was.

The electricity purged again, this time more frantic.

"What's going on?" Nancy asked.

"I don't know," Mike answered.

"Is Barb okay? Is she okay?"

"Gone. Gone. Gone." Eleven says, getting louder every time she said it.

Nancy gasped, placing her hand over her mouth.

"It's okay. It's okay. It's okay." Joyce was saying to El, who was now screaming the word.

Jess got into the bath, much to everyone's surprise and held onto El's head.

"You're okay, you're safe. No one's here to hurt you, alright? You're safe, I'm here." Jess whispered, stroking her head as El gasped.

"It's okay, we're right here. We're right here, honey." Joyce says, holding onto El's hand.

The boys exchanged knowing glances as Jess whispered reassuring words to El, the last time she reassured someone like this was when her sister had a nightmare in one of their sleepovers.

"It's okay, we got you. Don't be afraid. We're right here with you. We're right here with you." Joyce says, holding onto her arm.

"It's okay. It's okay." Jess says, kissing El's forehead.

"It's okay. It's okay, you're safe. You're okay, honey." Joyce says.

"Castle Byers," El mumbled, calm now.

Joyce looked at Jonathan.

"Will?" El asked.

Joyce gasped, leaning in.

El wasn't screaming or panting unevenly which meant he was still alive.

"You tell him...tell him I'm coming. Mom is coming."

El mumbled quietly, and Jess knew she was delivering the message.

"Hurry."

Hopper and Jess turned to the radio, before turning back to El.

"Okay. Listen, you tell him to...to stay where he is. We're coming. We're coming, okay? We're coming, honey." Joyce tells her.

El mumbled, Jess hearing 'Will' across the mumbles.

Suddenly, whimpering is heard on the radio and Jess immediately took the goggles off, causing El to shot up, causing everyone except her to exclaim in shock.

Jess pulled El close to her as she whimpered, hugging her from behind.

Joyce wrapped her arms around the two girls, El holding onto Joyce's arm while pressing her back closer to Jess.

"Oh! Oh, god. Okay, okay." Joyce says, pulling the girls a bit closer.

"I've got you, I've got you," Jess whispered.

El breathed heavily, tears starting to form.

"It's okay. I got you. I got you." Jess whispered, kissing El's head.

El cried as she held onto Joyce's arm and being hugged by her sister as they murmured reassuring words.

"I got you, honey," Joyce whispered to her.

"I'm here. Estoy aquí." Jess whispered, hugging her a bit tighter.

Joyce kissed the side of her head, as El sobbed.

"You did so good. Are you okay?"

X

Lucas wrapped a towel around El, Jess closing it around her body.

She shivered in her own towel, wrapping it tighter around her body.

She turned to see Nancy leave, causing her to furrow her eyebrows in recognition.

She knew that move.

She made it herself.

"I'm gonna go talk to Nancy, she needs someone to vent to," she announced.

El widened her eyes and grabbed her hand.

"Stay."

Jess smiled and looked at El.

"Don't worry sis, I won't be long."

Their cheeks flushed at what Jess called El, Mike smiling at the two still getting used to acknowledging each other as 'sisters'.

"Promise?"

"Promise. I'll be back."

She lets go of El's hand and runs out where Nancy had gone.

X

"NANCY!"

Nancy turned to see the Colombian girl, wrapping the towel tighter around her body.

"Jess I don't want to talk right now."

"Yes, you do. You need someone to vent to."

"About what?"

"About Barb, Nance!" Jess exclaimed, giving her an exasperated look.

Nancy shook her head.

"And what good will it do? You don't know how it feels to lose someone you care about."

Jess narrowed her eyes.

"Are you claiming that my sister Gabby meant NOTHING to me?!"

Nancy froze, her eyes widening.

"Jess, s-sorry, that just came out of my mouth, I wasn't thinking."

Nancy sighed, and without thinking, she spilled.

"It's just...what if I went back home with her that night? What if I could've prevented it? She wouldn't be dead! She's dead because of me!" Nancy exclaimed, tears running down.

"I get it, Nancy, I do. When Gabby got hit by that car, my world froze. All I could think was how I could've warned her before we crossed the street. How, we could've crossed the street together. How, it should've been ME who got hit by that car and died." Jess says, looking at Nancy in the eyes.

"But you know what? Gabby wouldn't want me to wonder about the 'what-ifs' or to blame myself for her death. She'd want me to live my life to the fullest and do something meaningful with it as long I'm still alive. I stopped wondering about the 'what-ifs' after a year of her death, and I stopped blaming myself a week ago." Jess admitted, causing Nancy to sob, covering her mouth.

"And Barb wouldn't want you to blame yourself either. Maybe you could have done something to change what happened, maybe I could have done something but, that's the funny thing about the past; you can't change what happened." Jess says, shrugging.

Nancy looked at the 12-year-old with a new respect in her eyes.

She walked over to the girl and hugged her, holding her tight.

"I'm so sorry about Gabby and I'm sorry about calling you a 'Colombian Whore'. I didn't mean it."

Jess smiled and hugged her back.

"It's okay. I forgive you."

They release from the hug and giggle, Nancy, wiping the tears from her eyes.

"You're like a little sister to me Jess, you know that right?"

"Of course I do Nance. Like how you know you're like a big sister to me."

She sighed, looking at her.

"If you need to talk or vent about something to me, let me know. Don't bottle it up like I did. You'll explode." Jess told her.

Nancy nodded, remembering how it affected Mike when Jess pushed the boys away.

It was painful to watch.

"Good. I gotta go back. El needs me."

Nancy nodded, smiling as Jess turned and left.

She couldn't change the past, but she damn well can do something in the present.

23. Chapter 23

Summary for the Chapter:

Jess and Dustin talk about their kiss, and Jess and El talk about Snow Ball.

Jess had her head laid on El's shoulder who had her head on Mike's shoulder, their hands gripping onto each other.

Mike was bouncing his leg up and down in impatience, checking his watch and looking out the door.

He got up, causing El to look up and Jess to raise her head, looking when she felt El lay her head on her shoulder, tightening her grip on the girl's hand.

Mike came back, saying;

"They're gone."

"What?" Lucas asked.

"Nancy and Jonathan. His car's gone."

"They're probably just sucking face somewhere," Dustin says, causing Jess to pull a disgusted face.

"Ew! Dustin!"

"Gross!" Lucas said in disgust.

"No. No way!" Mike exclaimed.

"Did they go with the chief?"

"I don't know."

"No."

Jess looked to see El, her eyes on Mike.

"What? Did you see them? Do you know where they went?"

"Yes."

"Where? Where did they go?"

"Demogorgon," El answered, causing Jess to tense in fear.

Mike looked at Jess and back to El.

X

"Guys, guys! This is crazy! We can't just wait around." Mike exclaimed.

"Mike, in case you forgot, we're still fugitives. The bad men are still looking for us." Lucas reminded him.

"Yeah, and we don't even know where your sister is," Dustin added.

"El can find them," Mike says.

"Seriously, Mike?" Jess exclaimed, causing the boys to look at the two girls, El still laying her head on her shoulder.

"Mike, look at her." Dustin agreed, raising his arm towards the two.

Mike looked towards El and frowned.

Dustin was right.

She was still too weak and tired to go looking for anyone right now.

And Jess doesn't know how to control her powers so, that option was a no go.

"I still think we should stick to the chief's plan." Dustin continued.

"Exactly. We stay here, keep El out of sight and keep her safe." Lucas says, looking at him.

"That's the most important thing, remember?" Lucas says, causing Mike to sigh.

"Besides, she's okay. She's with Jonathan."

"Yeah, and she's kind of a badass now, so..." Dustin says, walking off.

"Well, where are you going? You just said stick to the plan!" Mike exclaimed.

"I am. I'm just gonna go get some chocolate pudding." Dustin says, causing Jess to perk up, El getting the memo and lifting her head from Jess' shoulder, allowing Jess to get up and follow Dustin from behind.

"I heard Lunch Lady Phyllis hoards that shit. I can't wait to expose her." Jess exclaims, causing Dustin to smile and blush.

"Are you two serious?!" Mike exclaimed.

"El needs to be recharged!" they both yelled, using her as an excuse to get pudding.

Jess turns to Dustin and whispered;

"But in all seriousness, she really DOES needs to be recharged."

"We all do," he whispered back, causing her to giggle.

X

Jess opened the refrigerator door, exclaiming in joy.

"FUCKING HELL YES!! I KNEW IT!!" she shrieked.

Dustin and Lucas rushed up to her, Dustin grinning.

"I knew it."

"Yeah."

"Always lying, saying she's out," Dustin says.

"Bald-faced liar." Jess giggled, her arms holding a pile of chocolate pudding.

"MIKE, I FOUND THE CHOCOLATE PUDDING!" Dustin yelled.

"CORRECTION! I FOUND THE CHOCOLATE PUDDING!" Jess yelled, causing Dustin to laugh.

"OKAY!!"

"Damn, someone's cranky." Jess giggled at Mike's irritated yelled.

Lucas noticed how Dustin was looking at Jess and decided it was a good time to exit.

"I'm going to see if there are any water bottles here," he mumbled, setting the chocolate pudding in his arms aside, leaving Jess and Dustin alone.

"So..." Jess mumbled, looking at Dustin, who froze.

"Can we talk?" he blurted out.

"Sure, if it's about the fact that I...uh...kissed you." Jess stammered, turning red.

"Did you mean it or, was it...what do they call it again?"

"'In the moment'?" Jess asked.

"Yeah. Was it that?" Dustin asked, looking at her.

"It was a bit of both, actually," Jess admitted.

Dustin's eyes widened.

"O-Oh."

"Yeah..."

Dustin hesitated before asking.

"Do you like-like me?"

Jess laughs nervously.

"Yeah, I do. It's pretty obvious," she admitted, looking at him.

Dustin's cheeks went red.

"I understand if you don't feel the same way. We can still be best friends if you don't-"

"No! I mean...I do like you like that!" Dustin exclaimed, causing Jess to look at him.

"I mean...at least I think I do," he mumbled.

Jess smiled at him.

"Dustin, I think you're confused about how to feel about it."

Dustin looked down, biting his lip.

"I don't exactly have an answer for you right now. I don't want to reject you, but, I can't exactly accept your feeling either," he admitted.

"And that's okay! It took me a while for me to realize that I liked you more than a friend." Jess assured him, giving him a small smile.

"Can we, still be best friends? At least until I know what my answer is." Dustin asked, causing Jess to scoff.

"Dustin, we're ALWAYS going to be best friends, regardless if we end up dating or not," she says, causing Dustin to grin.

"Now, I'm going to go and deliver this pile of chocolate pudding to the lunch room. I can't wait to see what El's reaction is to chocolate pudding."

Dustin nods, smiling at her.

She turns to leave, walking towards the doorway when she froze, her jaw dropping at the sight she saw...

Mike kissing El.

She bit her tongue HARD, to keep from exclaiming in shock and,

admittedly, from yelling out 'FINALLY!' because it was so painfully obvious those two liked each other more than friends.

She watched as Mike pulled away, watching El's reaction as she smiled at him and he smiled back.

And of, course, the moment was interrupted by not Jess, but by lights from the window, which meant the teenagers were back.

"Nancy. Hold on, I'll be right back. Stay here." Mike says, getting up and running out to the door.

El turned to watch Mike, breathing in and out from the shock.

"So..."

She flinched, turning to see Jess who now put all the pudding cups on the table, smiling at El.

"That happened."

El blushed, smiling bashfully.

Jess grinned.

"About time too, I swear if he wasn't going to kiss you by the end of this week, I would have pushed you two to collide lips."

El giggled, knowing a bit of sarcasm to know that she was joking.

Well, unknown to her, she was only HALF joking.

"Well, I have to admit, you're not the only one who shared a kiss tonight. I kissed Dustin back at Mike's." Jess admitted, causing El to widen her eyes.

"Snow Ball?"

"Snow Ball? Uh...we MIGHT go. It depends if Dustin asks me to go with him on a date or something. But, even if he doesn't, I'll still go so I can show you how to dance to some of the songs...except for the slow ones. I'll leave those to Mike." Jess grinned.

El smiled, excited to see what it would feel like to go to a dance.

To feel normal for another day.

24. Chapter 24

Summary for the Chapter:

"Goodbye, Mike...Jessie."

Dustin and Lucas plopped the chocolate pudding on the table, Jess already gone through her 3rd cup by the time they brought them in.

"This will charge your battery right up, I'm telling you," Dustin says, Jess, giggling.

"Guys! Guys!"

Jess turned to see Mike, her eyebrows furrowing when she saw fear in his eyes.

"What is it?" Lucas asked.

"They found us."

A clatter was heard when the pudding cup slipped from Jess' hand.

Her eyes widened and turned to El.

El looked to Jess in fear.

"Well, what're we standing around here for?! Let's go!" Jess exclaimed, taking El's hand, running out the lunch room with Mike grabbing onto El's other hand, Lucas and Dustin running ahead of them.

X

They ran down the steps of the hallway, El's hands squeezing Mike's and Jess' hand tightly, fear racking through her veins.

"How did they find us?"

"I don't know, but they knew we were in the gym."

"Lando."

Jess froze when the doors they were headed to opened, men with guns entering.

"Got 'em!"

"Go, go, go, go, go!" Mike yelled, all of them turning around.

"Come on!"

El was in front of the group, freezing when more men came.

"Back! Go back!" Mike yelled.

"Go, go! Go left!"

More men and a woman came, causing El to freeze when they pulled out their guns.

She didn't know what to do.

They were surrounded.

Suddenly, the men gasped when a figure walked up to El, wrapping her arms around her, pressing her head to their chest.

She knew who it was, and she knew what she was planning.

Tilting her head down, she glared at the bad men, focusing her power.

Jess tilted her head up, narrowing her eyes, her upper teeth showing as her bottom lip covered her bottom row, focusing as well.

The men started bleeding from their eyes, nose, and ears as El and Jess stared them down, blood running down their own noses.

Then, a squelching sound was heard as they fell to the ground, all dead.

Jess released El, backing up, feeling a bit light-headed as she wiped her nose quickly so that Dustin and Lucas don't notice.

But immediately regrets that decision as El fell forward, exhausted.

"¡Once!" she exclaimed, kneeling down towards El.

"El, are you okay?" Mike asked, his voice frantic as he shook her.

"El!"

Jess looked at Mike, noticing how his voice rose in worry.

"Something's wrong."

"She's just drained," Lucas says.

"No, no it's probably worse." Jess stammered.

After all, she was still awake.

She felt weak, yes, but she was still awake.

"No, no, no, she won't wake up. El!" Mike exclaimed, shaking her.

"El! El!"

"Mike, come on, we gotta go. We gotta get El out of here." Jess says, looking at him.

"She's barely breathing."

"We gotta go," Lucas says.

"Leave her!"

Jess looked up, her eyes widening in recognition.

It was the elder man from her flashback.

She frowned, standing next to Mike, glaring them down.

"Step away from the child."

"No! You want her? You have to kill us first." Mike said as Dustin and Lucas walked up to the two.

"That's right!" Dustin yelled.

"Eat shit!" Lucas yelled.

"Go to fucking hell!" Jess roared.

Suddenly, men grabbed them from behind.

"Oh, no! No, no!" Mike yelled.

"No! No! Get off me!" Dustin yelled.

"Let me go!" Jess screamed.

"You idiot! No!" Lucas yelled.

"Get off me!"

"Ow! Let go!" Mike yelled.

"Get off me you asshole!" Jess yelled.

Jess suddenly screamed in pain, the man gripping her hair back tightly.

TOO tightly.

"Eleven? Eleven, can you hear me? Eleven?" the man asked El, holding onto her head.

El opened her eyes, closing them again.

"Papa?"

"Yes, yes, it's your papa."

"Get off me!" Mike exclaimed.

"Let go!" Jess exclaimed.

El turned at the sound of their voices, her eyes widening at the sight of her friends being held back.

"I'm here now."

"LET HER GO! LET HER GO YOU BASTARD!" Mike yelled.

"LET MY SISTER GO YOU PSYCHOPATHIC SON OF A BITCH!" Jess screamed.

El whimpered, looking around.

"Shh, shh, you're sick. You're sick, but I'm going to make you better. I'm going to take you back home, where I can make you well again. Where we can make all of this better, so no one else gets hurt."

El looked at the man, feeling no sense of love, caring, or protection from him.

According to what Jess told her to look for in a person, not only when they hug, but the vibe they give you, this man was-

"Bad."

The man's smirk dropped.

"Bad."

She reached out to Mike and Jess.

"Mike. Jessie."

They both were struggling against their hold, wanting nothing more than to get to her and protect her when she called out to them.

"Mike! Jessie!"

El sniffs, pushing the man's hand away from her, calling out to them again.

"Mike. Jessie."

The electricity started to spike, catching everyone's attention.

"Blood," Mike said.

"What?" Lucas asked.

"Blood," Jess repeats what Mike said.

The wall was breaking, something coming out of it.

A monster popped out of it, causing Jess to freeze.

She knew what it was.

It was the-

"Demogorgon," Dustin says, finishing her thought.

The Demogorgon roared at everyone, and the bad men released them, shooting at the Demogorgon.

Jess wasted no time lifting El up in her arms, Mike yelling at her to hurry.

"Go, go, go, go, go!" he yelled, helping El up in her arms, the boys surrounding her to protect them both.

"Come on, come on!"

"Go, go!"

X

Guns were firing as Jess held El close, following Mike with Dustin and Lucas covering her from behind.

"Come on, come on!"

"Oh, my god!"

Yelling is heard, as they enter the science room.

"Sorry. Hold on, we're almost there. We're almost there."

Jess rushed to the table to lay El on.

"Come on. Come on."

She lifted El up, looking to the boys.

"Help, help."

They helped lift her up on the table.

"Come on, get her on the table."

As they set her down, El groans, Jess stroking her head, looking at her as El turned and let Mike hold her hands.

"Just hold on a little longer okay?" Mike says, sniffing.

"He's gone. The bad man's gone. We'll be home soon, and my mom...she'll get you your own bed. You can eat as many Eggos as you want."

El smiled at him, squeezing his hands a bit tighter.

Mike sniffs before continuing.

"And, we can go to the Snow Ball."

Jess bit her lip to hide the small smile at the all the small things he was promising to do once this whole mess got cleared up.

"Promise?" El asks softly.

Mike snuffles.

"Promise."

El smiled.

Jess chuckled, tears running down her cheeks.

"Well, I don't know if I can beat Snow Ball but, once this mess clears up, I'll teach you how to understand Spanish so you can understand what I'm saying half the time. We're going to have a LOT of sleepovers, just you wait...and...we can actually be sisters." Jess says, causing El to look up at her.

"Promise?"

"Promise."

El's smile widened.

Suddenly, the monster screeched, causing them to scream.

Jess backed away from the table, removing her backpack and unzipping it quickly, grabbing the rifle.

She removed the safety and cocked it.

More thuds were being heard and the gunfire became less frequent.

"I-I-Is...Is it dead?" Dustin stuttered.

The Demogorgon crashed through the door, roaring.

"Go, go, go, go!" Mike yelled.

"Get the wrist rocket! Get the wrist rocket now!" Dustin yelled.

"Go, go, go, go, go!"

"Go, go, go!"

"Take it out now!"

Jess concentrated, pulling the trigger.

The rifle jumped on her hand, and she growled when it did nothing, the Demogorgon still coming forward.

She loaded the gun again.

"Get the rocks, get the rocks, get the rocks!"

"Getting the rocks!"

"Give me one."

"Come on!"

"Go! Go! Kill it! Kill it!"

"Fire! Fire!"

She saw Lucas pull the wrist rocket and she shot at the Demogorgon at the same time he fired.

Nothing.

"Give me another one."

"Kill it! Bastard!"

"Kill it! Go, go, go, go!"

"Kill it now!"

They both fired, only for it have no effect.

Jess growled loudly, reloading.

"Get, get, get...come on, kill the bastard!"

"It's not working!" they both yelled.

"Hit him again! Shoot him again!" Mike yelled.

"Kill him!" Dustin yelled.

They both fired.

Nothing.

Jess attempted to reload, but she couldn't.

She gasped, horror on her face.

"I'M OUT OF AMMO!" she screamed, dropping the gun, covering her mouth.

"Keep going! Come on!"

"Get, get, get...Come on, kill it!"

"Come on! Go, go, go!"

"KILL IT!"

Lucas pulled back the wrist rocket, everything seeming to go in slow motion.

He fired it, only for the Demogorgon to hit against the wall.

They all backed up, gasping.

How?

All the other rocks and bullets were unsuccessful.

They turned to see El walking up to the monster, Jess widening her eyes.

No...

"Eleven, stop!" Mike yelled.

El put her arm back, pushing Mike back with her mind as he yelled.

Jess sobbed, covering her mouth as Mike was pushed back by El in an attempt to stop her from sacrificing herself.

She knew what El was going to do, but she didn't care.

She ran towards El, grabbing her arm.

"¡ONCE, POR FAVOR, NO!"

El sniffed before she pushed Jess back, a tear running down as she heard her shriek as she was dragged against the floor, hitting the cupboard next to Mike.

Jess shrieked as the feeling of being pushed back against her will overcame her body, sliding on the floor and hitting the cupboard next to Mike.

They looked at each other and looked to El, who was staring at the monster she had pinned against the wall, writhing in pain. She turned to look at her friends, tears silently streaming down her cheeks.

Mike and Jess were crying as well, both of them clutching each other's hands tightly, their bracelets pressed onto each other.

"Goodbye, Mike....Jessie."

Jess covered her mouth and let out a shaky sob, Mike letting his tears run down silently.

El looked back at the monster and they could barely hear her say;

"No more."

She raised her arm, and the monster shrieked, causing the four kids to cover their ears.

Mike and Jess huddled closer together, watching as El screamed, leaning to each other, their foreheads touching, tears streaming down as they shut their eyes closed.

As quick as the screaming appeared, it stopped.

Hesitantly, Mike and Jess looked up, tears still running down.

El was gone.

They looked at each other and scrambled up, screaming out for her.

"El?! EL!"

"EL! ;ONCE!"

"Mike? Jessie?"

Dustin and Lucas were calling out for her as well, but Jess couldn't hear them.

"EL!"

"¡ONCE!"

"Mike? Jessie?"

"EL!!"

"EL! ¡ONCE!"

"Mike? Jessie? MIKE! JESSIE!"

"EL, WHERE ARE YOU?!"

"ONCE!! ONCE, ¡¿DONDE ESTAS?!"

"MIKE!!! JESSIE!!!"

"Eleven?! El?!"

"¡ONCE! EL!"

"MIKE!! JESSIE!!"

Jess froze, her body stops responding.

El was gone.

She was gone.

She dropped to the floor, on her knees.

"Jess?"

Mike turned to Jess, tears streaming down his cheeks as he witnessed his best friend took shaky breaths.

She suddenly threw her head back, letting out a loud wail of agony, tears streaming down her cheeks.

"NOT AGAIN!! NOT AGAIN!!" She wailed, grabbing her head.

Mike ran towards her and engulfed her in a hug, both clutching each other.

They sobbed, clutching the back of each other's shirts tightly, burying their heads in the crook of each other's necks.

Dustin and Lucas looked at each other, tears silently streaming down as Jess' screams and Mike's sobbing is all that is heard in the room.

They knew what they had to do.

They kneeled down towards them and wrapped their arms around the two.

Jess looked up at Dustin, eyes wide and red, tears still streaming down.

It shattered his heart because the last time she looked like this...

Was when they found out Gabby had died.

All he did was hug tighter, plopping his head on top of her's.

They heard shouting from outside, causing them to look up, releasing each other from the hug.

Jess tucked her necklace under her shirt and pulled down her flannel sleeve to hide her bracelet.

She wiped her tears, breathing in and making her perfect poker face.

The boys watched with sadness in their eyes on how easily she was able to produce the poker face.

She placed her gun (that had no ammo now) in her backpack and slid it on.

She held hands with Mike and Dustin as the Bad Men entered the room, giving them the glare she learned from El, which made them back off a bit.

But that didn't stop them from addressing her as if she was one of them.

"Miss. Hernandez, under the orders of your parents, you're coming with us."

She hardened her glare and simply answered;

"No."

25. Chapter 25

Summary for the Chapter:

The Party reunites with Will, and they talk about El. A month later, they're playing Dungeons and Dragons in Mike's basement, like old times...only, things feel different.

Mike and Jess were sitting on an ambulance car, a blanket covering both of them.

Jess had tears running down her cheeks as she rubbed her necklace, rubbing the word *ONCE* over and over again.

Mike had his head laid on her shoulder, tears streaming down his cheeks as he held onto her hand tightly, as if he would lose her too.

"Michael. Jessica."

Jess looked up to see Mrs. Wheeler walking up to them, Mike lifting his head.

"Oh, my god." she sobbed, walking towards them.

"Oh, my god."

She grabbed Mike and Jess, pulling them into a big hug.

"You're both okay."

She kissed their heads and that did for both Mike and Jess.

They sobbed, letting Mrs. Wheeler hold them and comfort them.

"You're both okay."

They didn't hug Mrs. Wheeler back, even though they absolutely NEEDED the hug.

All they wanted to do was to stop the heavy weight in their hearts.

When she finally released them, Mike looked at Jess, who was wiping her eyes and forming a VERY FAKE smile for Mrs. Wheeler's benefit.

He wanted to know how she was able to do it.

How she could survive one loss after the other.

To Jess, she lost another sister.

But to Mike?

He lost the person he truly loved.

The realization hit so hard in the chest he sobbed again, wrapping his arms around the Colombian girl, resting his chin on her shoulder.

"I loved her Jess." he whimpered.

Jess nodded shakily, wrapping her arms around him.

"I know Mike. I loved her too."

He buried his face in the crook of her shoulder and sobbed, holding onto her tightly.

As did Jess with him, making sure not to let go.

She wasn't going to push anyone away this time.

She was going to heal the proper way this time.

And if that meant letting Mike see her break down and at her worst

moments in depression, then so be it.

X

They were all at the hospital, Dustin and Lucas asleep as they laid on each other.

Mike and Jess would have teased them mercilessly if they weren't still grief-stricken.

Jess had her head laid on Mike's lap as he played with her hair, stroking it comfortingly.

She had been his armor for the past couple of hours, whenever he needed a hug or when he randomly broke down crying, she was there to comfort him.

Now it was his turn to comfort her in any way possible.

The door opened to reveal Jonathan, Mike, and Jess looking up.

Jess gasped, her depression temporarily forgotten.

She got up from Mike's lap, going to Dustin and Lucas, shaking them awake.

"Guys. Guys, he's up. Will is up. Guys, Will's up." Mike exclaimed, shaking them awake as well.

Lucas and Dustin whined as they woke up, jolting away from each other as Mike and Jess ran to the room.

"Guys, come on!" Mike exclaimed, his depression also being forgotten momentarily.

They all ran to the room, Mike opening the door to see Will awake.

"Byers!" Mike exclaimed, running to Will and plopping his head on his body, hugging him.

Lucas did the same, Mike placing his hand on his back.

"Be careful. Be careful with him." Joyce says, smiling at them.

"Move!" Dustin exclaimed.

"Move aside!" Jess laughed as they both pushed Mike and Lucas away, plopping onto his body as Will pats them both on the back.

Mike laughs.

"Guys, guys. Go easy on him." Jonathan says, smiling.

Jess got up and grinned at Mike, pure happiness written on their faces.

"You won't believe what happened when you were gone, man," Lucas said.

"It was mental," Dustin exclaimed.

"That's lightly putting it!" Jess laughed.

"You had a funeral," Lucas said.

"Jennifer Hayes was crying," Dustin added.

"And Troy peed himself," Lucas added.

"What?"

"In front of the whole school!" Dustin exclaimed.

"Yes!" Lucas laughed.

Will started to cough, their grins fading to worry.

"You okay?" Mike asked.

"It got me. The Demogorgon." Will said.

"We know. It's okay. It's dead." Mike said, hesitating before continuing, making sure to grab onto Jess' hand.

"We made a new friend. She stopped it. She saved us...But she's gone now."

The happy feeling that surrounded Mike and Jess vanished into thin air.

Jess sniffed, tears running down her cheeks as Mike looked down, squeezing her hand.

"Her name's Eleven."

Jess turned to Dustin, smiling at him.

"Like the number?"

"Well, we call her 'El' for short." Lucas says, smiling at Jess.

"Heh, well, I call her 'Once' like the Spanish translation for 'Eleven'. But, I call her 'El' too sometimes." she giggled, wiping her eyes.

"She's basically a wizard." Dustin says, causing grins to reappear on Mike's and Jess' faces to their relief.

"She has superpowers," Lucas whispered.

"More like a Yoda." Mike countered, causing Jess to laugh.

"She flipped a van with her mind, and these agents were trying to shoot us-" Dustin says.

"Yeah, it flipped over us-" Mike says, grinning.

"Then she squeezed the brains out..." Lucas says.

"And blood was pouring out of their faces." Jess laughed, smiling at Will's reaction to their stories about El.

"It was pouring out of their eyes." Mike says, laughing at how Jess overdramatically explained what El did.

"Agents just started grabbing us and stuff..." Lucas added.

"....shot out of the wall...." Dustin says, talking about the Demogorgon.

They continued on with their stories about El, the room filled with laughter and memories about the telekinetic girl that impacted their lives this week.

X

One month later...

It was December, and everything was back to the way it was.

Kind of...

"Something is coming. Something angry. Hungry for your blood. It is almost here." Mike says, the boys and Jess at his house for a DnD campaign.

"What is it?"

"It's the thessalhydra, I'm telling you," Dustin says.

"It's not the thessalhydra," Lucas says, causing Jess to roll her eyes.

"It IS t-t-the thessalhydra," she says, blushing bright red when she stuttered.

"Yeah! We're telling you, it's the thessalhydra." Dustin says, agreeing with Jess, but sneaking his hand under the table to hold hers, squeezing it gently.

She smiled, blushing.

Mike slams the figure down.

It's-

"The thessalhydra!" he exclaimed.

"Damn it." Dustin groaned.

"It roars in anger! Will your action!"

"What should I do? I-" Will says, turning to Lucas, Dustin, and Jess.

"Fireball him!" Lucas exclaimed.

Will looked to Dustin, expecting him to disagree.

But, he smirks, looking at Will.

"Fireball the son of a bitch."

Lucas smiled at Dustin while Will looked at Jess.

She scoffed.

"As if you need me to tell you that we should fireball the fucker," she answered for him, causing him to grin and take the dice, shaking it and rolling it.

"Fourteen!" Dustin exclaimed.

They all whoop in excitement.

"Direct hit. Will the Wise's fireball hits the thessalhydra. It makes a painful..."

Mike screeches, causing Jess to giggle.

"And then...it crumbles to the ground. Its clawed hand reaches for you one last time and, and, and, and..."

Mike pretends to be dead, causing Jess, Will, Lucas, and Dustin to cheer in victory.

"Lucas cuts off its seven heads, and Dustin places them into his bag of holding. Jess finds ancient texts to study where the thessalhydra attacked. You carry the heads out of the dungeon, victorious, and you present them to King Tristan. He thanks you for your bravery and service."

"Whoa. Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, that's not it, is it?" Dustin asked.

"No, there's a medal ceremony-"

"Oh, a medal ceremony? What are you talking about?" Dustin exclaimed.

"Yeah man, the campaign was way too short," Lucas argued.

"Yeah!" Will agreed.

"It was ten hours! Jess, help me out here!" Mike exclaimed.

"Yeah, I'm staying out of this." Jess giggled, watching the boys argue.

"But it doesn't make sense!"

"It makes sense."

"Uh, no, what about the lost knight?"

"And the proud princess?"

"And those weird flowers in the cave?"

"I don't know, it's-"

They look up to see Jonathan walk down, to pick up Will.

"Jeez, what's that smell? Have you guys been playing games all day,

or just farting?" he asked.

The middle schoolers chuckled.

"Oh, that's just Dustin. He farted. Dustin farted." Lucas teased, blowing raspberry.

"Okay," Dustin says, turning red as Jess burst out in laughter.

"Very mature, Lucas."

"Dustin farted."

Lucas blows raspberry again.

"Oh, hoho."

"Will," Jonathan says, making it clear it was time to go.

"Shut up."

"Dustin farted!"

"Bye guys," Will says.

"Bye, Will." Jess, Mike, and Dustin says.

Lucas and Dustin started hitting each other playfully, causing Jess to giggle as she watched them.

Jess turned to see Mike looking at El's pillow fort, her smile disappearing as she looked at it with equal longing as he did.

She walked over to him and placed her hand on top of his, causing him to look at her.

They smiled sadly at each other before looking back at the pillow fort again.

When the boys leave, they'll contact El together.

Like they have been for the past month since she disappeared.

They just hope that one day, El would be able to contact back if she was listening to their calls.

X

"Hey, Jess!"

Jess turned to see Dustin, who was about to leave placed a gift in her hand.

"You can open it later today. I hope you like it."

She smiled, looking at him.

"Thanks, Toothless." she giggled.

"No problem, Bookworm." Dustin grinned.

"***Bookworm & Toothless***, who would have thought we would be using those nicknames to tease each other?" Jess giggled.

Dustin smiled before sighing.

He hesitated before pecking her lips, pulling back after a second, giving a shy smile to her before he left.

He was still figuring out his feeling to the Colombian.

But, he kissed her as a way of saying 'thank you' for being in his life.

For being his best friend.

She smiled as she unwrapped the paper, grinning when 'Cycle of the Werewolf' by Stephen King is revealed in the title of the book.

She placed it in her backpack, where all her books were in, waving bye to Lucas and Dustin as they rode back to their houses.

Things may not be as normal as they once were...

But, if anything, it was less boring.

And a bit stranger.

And, to be honest, Jess liked it that way.

To be continued...

Notes for the Chapter:

Thanks for reading! The sequel will come as soon as I

finish writing it! Hoped you liked it!